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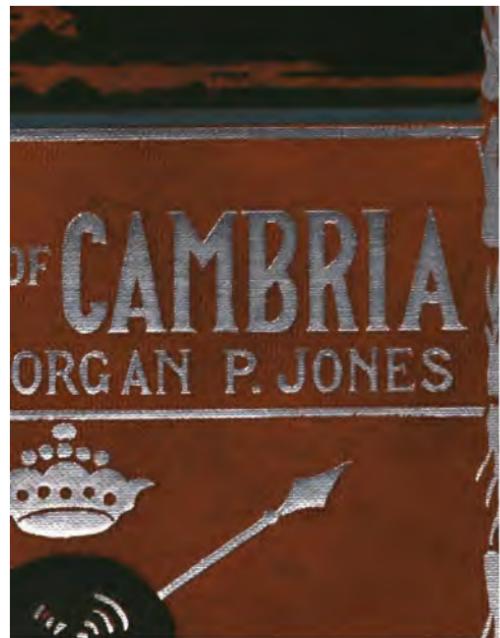
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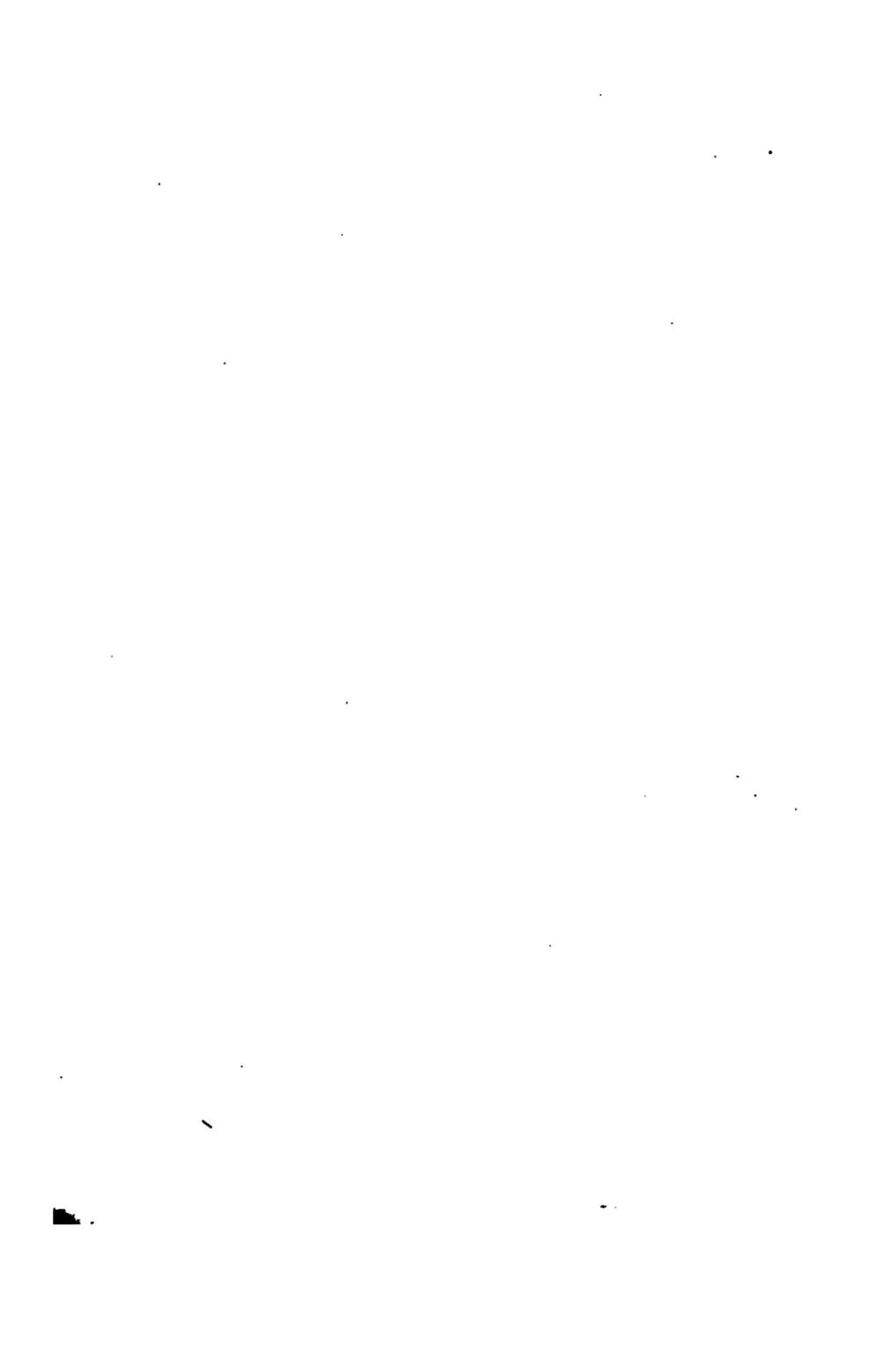
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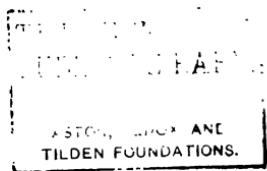


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MORGAN P. JONES.

THE

The Mad Trist

A VELLISH TALE OF THE
ELLEVENTH COUNTRY *

MORGAN E. JON'S

THE

The Mad Trist

PUBLISHERS

111

FIFTH AVENUE

NEW YORK

London

Montreal



THE
CHIEFS OF CAMBRIA

A WELSH TALE OF THE
ELEVENTH CENTURY *

BY
MORGAN P. JONES

THE
Abbey Press

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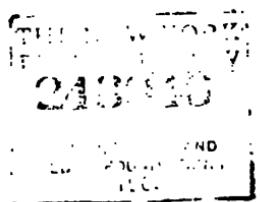
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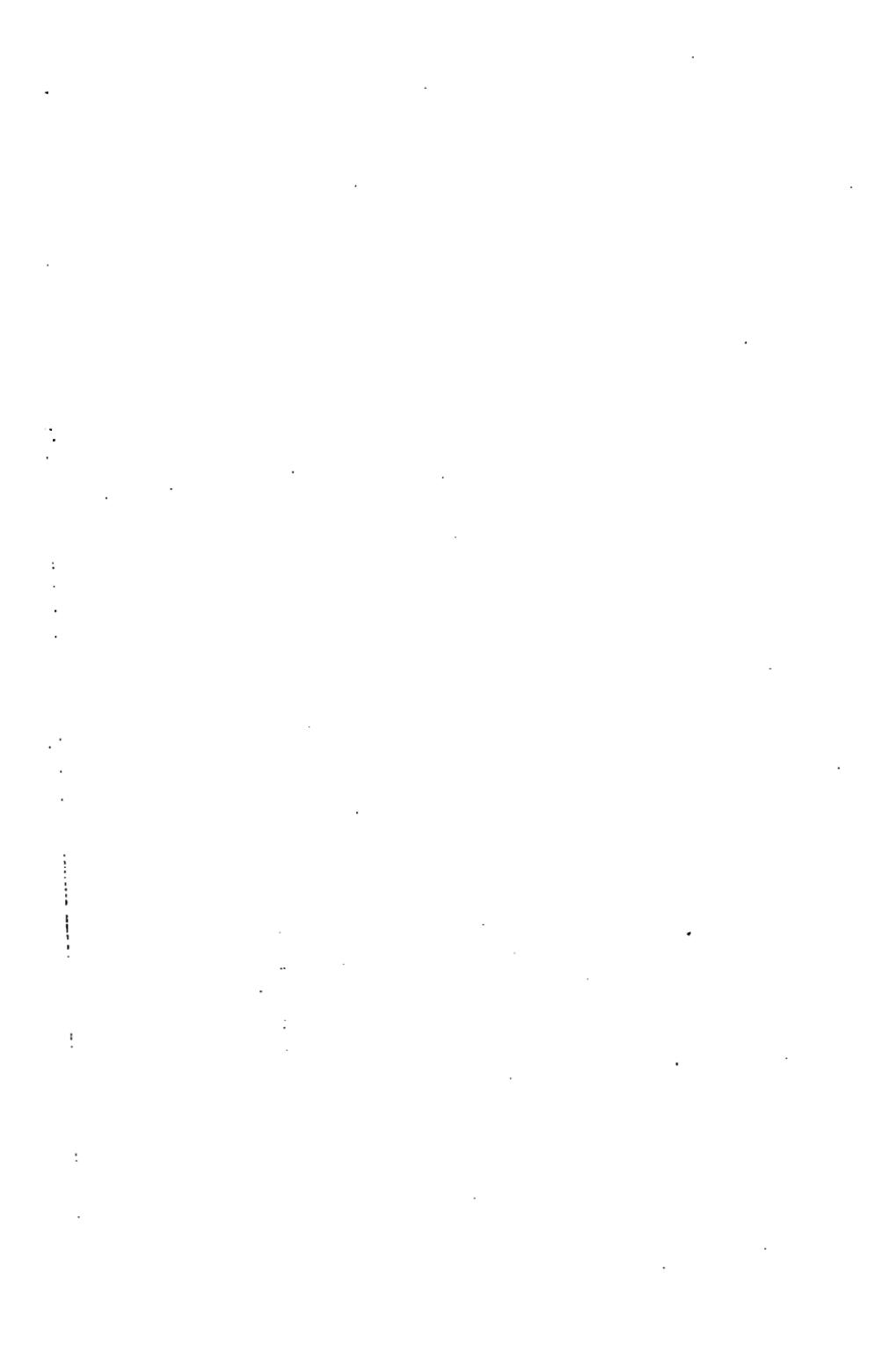
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TABLE OF CONTENTS.

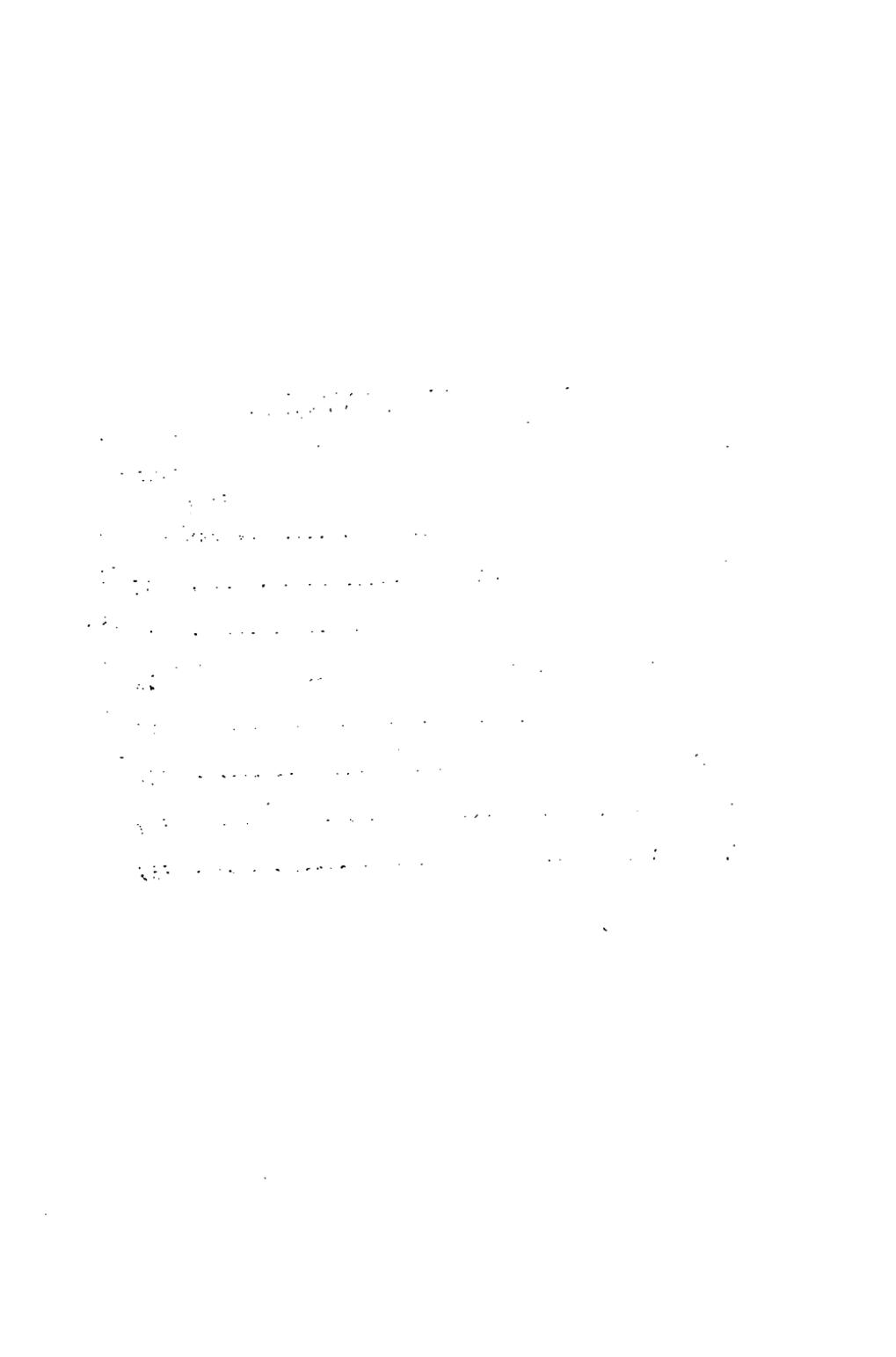
CHAPTER.	PAGE.
I. Saint Winifred's Well and the Hermit's Cave.....	9
II. The Red Dragon Inn.....	20
III. The Royal Banquet.....	29
IV. Whims and Prejudices.....	39
V. Treason.....	46
VI. Alarms and Pursuit.....	52
VII. A Strange Hospital.....	60
VIII. Presages of Love and War.....	70
IX. Armed Against the Foe.....	78
X. An Arrow and Its Work.....	85
XI. Woe to the Vanquished.....	90
XII. Among the Ruins.....	100
XIII. A Bloodless Victory.....	108
XIV. On the River Clwyd...	118
XV. Mischief Again Brewing.....	126
XVI. Baffled.....	133
XVII. A Visit to Powysland...	143
XVIII. Trahaiarn Falls Into a Trap.....	149
XIX. Sad News Reaches the Castle.....	156
XX. Among Thieves....	163
XXI. New Schemes.....	170
XXII. A Royal Suitor.....	177
XXIII. In the Robber's Den.....	185
XXIV. A Dreaded Event.....	195
XXV. Surprises	205
XXVI. At the Convent.....	214
XXVII. Caradoc and Harold...	226
XXVIII. The Unexpected Happens.....	233
XXIX. Death and Love.....	242



LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS.

FACING PAGE.

MORGAN P. JONES.....	<i>Frontispiece</i>
THE VALLEY OF THE ELWY.....	15
ST. ASAPH.....	57
THE VALE OF CLWYD.....	73
HEREFORD CATHEDRAL.....	95
RHUDDLAN CASTLE....	157
CEFN CAVE.....	209
TAN YR OGOF.....	239



THE CHIEFS OF CAMBRIA.

By Morgan P. Jones.

A Welsh Tale of the Eleventh Century.

CHAPTER I.

Saint Winifred's Well and the Hermit's Cave.

In A. D. 1054 Saint Winifred's Well, though not so widely known for its supposed supernatural efficacy in removing bodily diseases and infirmity as in later years, was the object of almost idolatrous regard in Gwynedd. The summer of that year brought a somewhat larger quota than usual of devoted pilgrims to worship at the shrine of its patron saint, and to get the benefit of its healing waters. But when winter came, the absence of comfortable quarters where the sick and the infirm might find shelter from the cold, caused the place to be deserted. An occasional traveler, however, lingered a moment under the rude structure built over and around the well, to quench his thirst or to try the healing effects of the water. On the day before Christmas two horsemen reined in their diminutive palfreys in front of the well, and one of them dismounting and shaking off the snow which had clung to his tunic of white linen as he rode in a storm that still added to the thickness of the

white mantle enveloping the earth, filled a horn with water and handed it to his companion with the remark,
“Einion ap Howel first, and after him his friend.”

“I am glad you know your place for once, Hoel,” was the reply; “but methinks when it comes to a question of booty you are apt to reverse the order.”

This the equestrian said as he lifted the horn to his lips. He and his companion were evidently on the best of terms with each other. Both were in the prime of life, and had blue eyes, brown hair, and heavy mustaches. The one who was still mounted, however, was the taller of the two, and also the most intellectual. His face showed that he could on occasion exercise no small degree of craftiness and duplicity; yet ordinarily his friends thought him genial and trustworthy. His companion was of a different type, combining the unscrupulousness of the robber with the cunning of the knave. They were still bantering each other when the shorter man pointing to a pedestrian who could be dimly seen approaching through the falling snowflakes said,

“Here comes one of the bardic fraternity, and no doubt an aspirant to kingly favor, and a bard of note.”

The other made no reply, but fixed his gaze on the bard, whose hoary locks and beard, and long robe fluttered in the wind as he labored on under the heavy burden of his harp, half-blinded by the snow. At the same time the bard’s dark, piercing eyes looked out from under his bushy eyebrows, and sought to discern the character of the men who were eyeing him with so much interest. Then as he came up to them he said apologetically,

“Your pardon, friends, for a moment’s intrusion on your presence. A long and laborious walk on a stormy

day like this calls for a brief rest and the means of assuaging my thirst."

"Your arrival is no intrusion, venerable bard," said the mounted traveler. "On the contrary, all are welcome to Saint Winifred's Well."

"Ay; and may the richest blessing of our patron saint rest on your hoary head," added the other, crossing himself. Then filling his horn and handing it to the bard he continued, "And may this healing draught quicken your flagging powers."

"I thank thee, friend," said the bard taking the proffered horn. "The illustrious Gryffydd ap Llewelyn should have thee for his cup-bearer."

"They say his majesty is never at a loss to find men who aspire to that distinction," was the reply. "They also say that his mead has no equal. Yet I question whether you will find it as wholesome a drink as that."

The bard emptied the horn, and handing it back to its owner with a wry face he remarked,

"I know not the taste of king Gryffydd's mead, but if it taste no better than this I want none of it."

"If you are wise you will speak less disparagingly, for you will find Ceridwen no match for Saint Winifred," said the owner of the horn with a frown.

"No offense should be taken where none is intended," continued the bard. "I knew not that this well was more sacred than a thousand others in Wales."

"Are you a Cambrian and a Christian, and have not heard the legend of Saint Winifred's Well?" asked the mounted horseman with astonishment. "Your costume and vocation bespeak you a frequenter of festal halls rather than a dweller in a cave."

"My voice has often been heard in the princely halls of the Deheubarth," was the reply. "But my voice has

never drowned what my ears should hear. Were Gryffydd ap Llewelyn as little known there as your patron saint, his enemies would have reason to rejoice."

"By my faith, that is very strange; nor can I account for it. Saint Winifred should be as famous as the king. You are a good listener are you not?"

"Ay, when I am in a comfortable position, and when the subject suits my mood. Pardon me, I will relieve myself of this burden, and rest myself under that roof in order the better to listen to what thou mayst have to say."

Suiting his action to his words the bard now seated himself on a stone bench within the rude structure already alluded to, and the two horsemen followed his example.

"You have heard of St. Beuno?" said the horseman who until now had remained mounted.

"I have heard the name, but I know not the man," the bard replied, glancing at a pile of crutches not far from where he sat.

"That is not strange since he died in the seventh century," continued the horseman with a smile. "Howbeit, St. Beuno had a most devout and beautiful niece, of noble parentage, called Winifred, whose protection and training devolved upon him by reason of permission given him by her father to build on his estate the church whose dilapidated walls support this roof. Not far distant was the palace of King Alen, whose son Caradoc was desperately in love with the charming maiden. The prince, watching his opportunity, surprised the object of his affections one Sunday morning at her home, and she, unable to return his love, and fearing violence, fled from his presence in this direction. But Caradoc, indignant at the treatment he had received, followed in hot pursuit,

and overtaking her yonder drew his sword and struck off her head. So violent was the blow that the head rolled into the church, stopping by the altar, and immediately this sacred fountain, which by the holy virgin's merits restores the health of multitudes, gushed up as it does this day."

"A most remarkable tale," said the bard as the speaker paused; "nor does it lose any of its charm in thy telling."

"But not more remarkable than what follows," was the reply. "St. Beuno immediately picking up the head joined it to the body, and miraculously restored her to life. But he thought fit to leave a slender mark around her neck as a reminder of Caradoc's crime. She lived fifteen years after that, and died the abbess of Gwytherin; but the impious prince fell dead the moment she was restored, and the earth swallowed his unholy corpse."

"A fitting sequel to a most interesting tale," gravely remarked the bard; "and to prove how firmly I believe it, and to confirm my vow to tell it wherever I go, I will drink another hornful of the saint's elixir of life."

"Good," exclaimed the narrator "you are less sceptical than I suspected. Had I the time I might relate other equally interesting tales connected with this well. But I perceive that my horse is growing impatient, and Hoel here is already worrying lest we fail to reach St. Asaph in time to dine with the bishop, for his reverend lordship knows far better how to provide and enjoy a good dinner than to feed his spiritual flock."

"Say rather that Einion ap Howel and not I smells the feast from afar this time," said the man called Hoel. "By my faith, he would go to the end of the earth for a chunk of venison or a bowl of steaming mead."

"Provided I had a good supply of roast beef and wine to last me on the way," retorted Einion ap Howel, whom we have already described as the smarter of the two. Then addressing the bard he said, "If I mistake not, your destination is not far from ours, and since to-morrow is Christmas we may count on seeing you at the royal banquet. Had I an extra horse with me I would gladly place it at your service, and thus make comparatively easy a journey which must otherwise tax both your strength and your patience."

"I shall thankfully take the word for the deed," replied the bard. "The vicissitudes of life have taught me to expect the bitter with the sweet. As to my present destination, suffice it to say that it is not Rhuddlan Castle."

"A bard is no less to be admired for being a philosopher also," smilingly remarked Einion ap Howel. "There is my hand, and with it goes a hearty invitation to visit Colsul Hall."

The next moment the horsemen were out of sight, and the bard now that he was alone gave himself to reflection, not only of a character foreign to the vocation of a lover of the muse, but actually of a treasonable cast. Much as he desired to indulge his thoughts, however, the lack of physical comfort soon caused him to resume his journey. This he did under conditions less trying to his patience than he had found earlier in the day, the snow-storm being temporarily abated.

Finding himself at length in a region abounding in deep, picturesque glens and fossiliferous caverns, he congratulated himself that his journey would soon be at an end. As he was unfamiliar with the region, however, he experienced greater difficulty in discovering the object which he sought than he had anticipated. He was standing at the base of a rock near the river Elwy,

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THE VALLEY OF THE ELWY.



peering hesitatingly into the yawning mouth of a cave, when a voice from the gloomy depths within bade him enter. He did as he was bidden. He had not proceeded far when the voice again addressed him. It was now within a few feet of him, and said,

"The safety of thy head no less than the health of thy heart requires humility. Stoop and follow me."

The bard obeyed, though he found it no easy matter owing to his heavy burden; and a moment later he was led into a large open space, not unlike a spacious room dug out of the rock, but which in reality was a natural cavern. In the center of this cavern a bright fire was burning, and beyond was dimly seen a rude contrivance resembling a table, and a clumsy cupboard in the vicinity of which hung a crucifix over a bed of rushes.

"This, then, is the hermit's abode," inwardly remarked the bard as he seated himself on a large bear skin near the fire, "and this stern-looking, clean-shaven, and tall individual, clad in sack-cloth gown and hood, and girt with a rope of rushes, must be the hermit himself."

"The seclusion of the woods has less attraction for the bard in these modern times than in the days when priests and bards alike studied the mysteries of the groves. I, therefore, infer, venerable bard, thy presence here betokens a mission of some importance. But thy business however pressing in its nature, can wait till I offer thee some refreshments."

Thus the hermit spoke while placing a newly-lighted torch on a sort of candlestick extending from a crack in the rock. Then throwing open the doors of the cupboard he took two small wooden dishes, one containing barley bread, and the other sweet-smelling herbs, and placed them on a low stool before the bard. To

these he added a drinking horn filled with water, and after pronouncing a blessing in Latin he said somewhat apologetically,

"If the palate which is accustomed to the luxuries of princes can relish what heaven has ordained for hermits thou art welcome to this humble fare."

"Holy father, I shall find no fault with your fare," said the bard concealing his disgust at what was set before him; "but it would greatly add to my pleasure were you to partake with me."

"The meal is scarcely enough for one," was the reply. "Besides I have already eaten more than I deserve to have. It is for priests and monks to fast and not to feast; to crucify the flesh and exercise the soul in all good works. The holy saints—may they ever defend us—left us not an example of worldly ease, but of patient suffering and self-denial. But thou art not here for a homily."

"Assistance and advice, holy father, would better suit my present want," said the bard, striving to satisfy his hunger with the scant supply of food set before him; "and this letter, whose author is not unknown to you, will acquaint you with the mission which brought me here."

Taking the letter handed him, the hermit moved closer to the lighted torch, and while he perused the writing the bard watched his face in silence. He beheld no sign of interest, however, other than the lifting of the eye-brows once or twice.

"I commend thy wisdom in assuming that guise," presently remarked the hermit folding the letter, "for the slayer of thy father is no friend of thine."

"Nor is he, holy father, a friend to Wales. He is an

usurper, and a tyrant, whose foot is on the neck of every true son of Cambria."

"Thou speakest truly, and certain expressions in this letter seem to indicate that at least one of his half-brothers shares in thy opinion."

"Can you not lend your aid to rid the world of our common enemy, and thus advance the cause of freedom?"

"I am, as thou seest, a man of peace; to bear arms is not among the functions of a priest."

"A priest may advise those who are willing to bear arms, especially when stimulated with the promise of a rich reward. If I be elevated to the throne of the De-heubarth, as I shall be when the usurper is out of the way, I shall surely remember all my friends."

"My first advice to thee is to count the cost before entering on a course that may prove fatal to thee while thine enemies escape unscathed, 'What king, going to make war against another king, sitteth not down first and consulteth whether he be able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand?' So says sacred writ. Art thou prepared to meet Gryffydd ap Llewelyn on the field of battle?"

"No; but is there not another and surer way to encompass his destruction? The dagger sometimes succeeds where the sword fails."

"Ay, Julius Cæsar, the first invader of our sacred soil had reason to think so when treason ended his career. But he that would wield the dagger must take his life in his hand."

"That will I most gladly do, if you will aid me to crawl into the tyrant's favor. Perchance you have a friend at court who needs a servant."

"Bards find easier access to the hearts of kings than

do servants. Canst not thou play well the part of a bard as well as assume his disguise?"

"My father thought me equal to his chief bard, and often did I fan his patriotism into a burning flame."

"If thou art not too much fatigued perhaps thou wilt favor me with one or two of thy favorite songs," suggested the hermit as he removed the empty dishes to the table, and set the low stool between the table and the cupboard.

Uncovering his harp the pseudo bard immediately set himself to humor a man that was likely to be a most efficient accomplice in his murderous undertaking. He had a good voice, and his fingers as they touched the harpstrings evinced more than ordinary skill.

"That will do," said the hermit when the performer paused. Then he continued, "The Christmas festivities, as thou must know, have already begun, and to-morrow Gryffydd's banquet will be graced by the presence of eminent and noble bards. There is thy opportunity; avail thyself of it."

"Your excellent and wise suggestion, holy father, shall find me its willing slave," was the reply, "provided you help me to remove a difficulty that seems all but insurmountable. A bard who aspires to courtly favor must be known to fame. The whole of Gryffydd's dominion will be represented at the banquet, and I, despite my hoary locks, cannot claim distinction even as a local bard of note."

"Then thou must bring greeting from the North. Thou shalt be presented as the chief bard of one of the Highland chiefs. I am not unacquainted with the customs of the Scots, and therefore can teach thee all thou needst to know before the banquet."

"Ha, ha, good! Perhaps you will also accompany

me to the castle, or at least find a way to introduce me to some friend high in courtly favor. I might easily worm myself into kingly esteem through the influence of Bleddyn and Rhiwallon, the king's half brothers; but they must not be suspected of knowing me, much less of being connected with a scheme such as we are determined to carry out."

"Thou needst not trouble thyself about that. I will write thee a letter of introduction, which thou must hand to Einion ap Howel. Thou wilt find him this evening at the Red Dragon Inn in St. Asaph, whither thou must go after a while when thou art sufficiently rested. I expect a friend of mine to call here in the course of the evening, and he will be glad to conduct thee there. And by the way, thou wilt do well to cultivate his friendship, for he may be able to render thee valuable assistance."

Much pleased with these suggestions the pseudobard now laid his harp aside, and wrapped it in its covering. He also temporarily removed his false hair and beard, that he might feel more comfortable, and resuming his place near the fire he listened to a few instructions from the hermit relative to the part he was to play on the morrow. He did not evince the least surprise at the unscrupulous character of the hermit; on the contrary, his face, which was neither old nor bad-looking, showed much pleasure at what he heard. Perhaps the general corruption of that age, and his knowledge of the clergy caused him to make undue allowance.

CHAPTER II.

The Red Dragon Inn.

The Red Dragon Inn, which was a barnlike structure with walls of branches woven together, and a thatched-roof, was situated near the center of the village of St. Asaph. Two small rooms in the rear of the building were devoted to the use of the landlord's family, while a much larger room than either or both of them had long been a place of public resort for the peasants of that vicinity, and of accomodation to the traveler. There were occasions, also, when the landlord, to his great delight, found a representative or two of the upper classes among his guests, and it is safe to say he never failed to turn these rare visits to his own advantage. It was with much pleasure also that he always greeted the arrival of Christmas eve; not that he cared especially for the deeper sentiments connected with it, but rather because superstition and popery had gathered around it a number of customs, more pagan than Christian, that tickled his fancy and proved remunerative to his pocket. As usual, therefore, the day before Christmas found him superintending the making of garlands and festoons of evergreen, which were duly hung on the bare walls of the hall and on the posts that supported the roof. Then after engaging the services of another bard in addition to the one that he employed on ordinary occasions, he seated himself on the rush-covered floor, before a fire in the center of the room, to contemplate the decorations

as best he could through the clouds of smoke that gradually rose toward a hole in the roof, and to wait for the merry crowd that he expected in the evening. Nor did he have to wait long before the peasants came dropping in, accompanied by their wives or sweethearts, and grouped themselves as near the fire as possible.

The guests already numbered more than a score when Hoel, accompanied by a man clad in the garb of a peasant arrived, and found a place near the fire. As Hoel was much in the company of Einion ap Howel it was generally believed that he was the overseer of his estates, and as both found this impression rather convenient, neither of them took any pains to explain their true relation to each other. The landlord sharing with the others present in the popular belief was effusive in his words of welcome, and expressed the hope that the lord of Colsul was in good health.

"His lordship's health was never better," said Hoel. Then he continued to the delight of all, "I should not be surprised to see him enter at any moment to try the quality of your mead on his way to the castle."

"It will not be the first time for his lordship to taste the mead made at the Red Dragon," remarked the landlord, with no small degree of pride; "nor will he find it less to his liking than usual. I hope you find it to your taste."

"If he finds the mead as much to his taste as I find this cwrw is to mine, methinks he has no reason to complain," said Hoel's companion, who being taken for what he appeared to be, an ordinary peasant, had received but little attention.

"I infer from your speech that you are not from these parts," observed the landlord, on whom the compliment was not lost. "You are, I take it, from the south."

"You have rightly guessed," said Hoel; "but he is no less a Welshman on that account."

"No less a Welshman to be sure," echoed the landlord. "It does not follow that a man is not a Welshman because he is a Hwntw. You know that we of the North call the people of the South Hwntws; but we all know that there is no little difference between the Welsh of the two sections, and between different parts of the same section for that matter. I have heard so many dialects that I can tell almost to a certainty whether a man is from Dyved, Powys or Gwynedd, and from what particular part of each."

Further conversation on this subject was prevented at this point by the entrance of Einion ap Howel with a few attendants, and his presence produced a mark sensation among the guests, who promptly made room for him by the fire near Hoel and his companion.

"Bring the lord of Colsul some of your best mead, some that is even better than this you have brought me," said Hoel to the landlord, who now that a great chieftain was among his guests felt very self-important.

"Ay, bring me the best you have, or else the Red Dragon shall not see me again soon," commanded Einion with a sly wink at Hoel. "And let us have some more music, and let it be of the lively kind too."

The bards who had just stopped playing when Einion entered immediately obeyed, and while they poured forth a stream of melodious sounds Hoel handed the chieftain a letter he had previously received from the hand of his companion. The act attracted no undue attention, nor did the company evince any added degree of curiosity when Einion, after draining his drinking-horn nearly to the bottom, arose and retired to a spot where one of the numerous rush candles which dimly

lighted the room was burning. As the letter was short, its perusal required but a moment, and the chieftain was about resuming his place by the fire when he noticed that a buxom lass, who had just arrived with her lover, was unconsciously standing beneath a bunch of mistletoe, and he kissed her, greatly to the amusement of all. The maiden took the kissing in good part, considering it more of an honor than an indignity to be kissed by a lord, and as she blushingly joined the other young people accompanied by her lover, Einion returned to his seat, and gave a significant nod to Hoel and the man by his side, whom the reader has doubtless already guessed to be the bard whom Einion had seen at St. Winifred's Well several hours before. In the conversation that followed, however, no reference was made to the letter or to the character that Hoel's companion was assuming.

Though Einion had no intention of staying long at the inn when he entered, he found the mead so much to his liking that he seemed to forget that he was on his way to king Gryffydd's court. Nor did he lack for amusement. The sensation caused by his kissing the maiden had scarcely subsided when another mirth-provoking incident occurred. A stout, rosy-cheeked country girl arrived with a number of others, and stood for a moment under the mistletoe glancing around the dimly-lighted hall. A burly fellow with red hair and beard, bent on following the example of Einion ap Howel, sought to steal a kiss from her, but the damsel was too quick for him, for she gave him a box on the ear that sent him back to his place by the fire like a cur that had received a whipping, amidst a loud outburst of laughter.

"Ha, ha, good! excellent!" said Einion with uncontrollable mirth. "Iolo Goch has at last met his match,

and in a girl too! By St. Winifred, I never saw him so completely cowed before."

"If he is wise," remarked the landlord after another outburst of laughter, "he will take lessons from your lordship before he again attempts to kiss a girl."

"I fear he is too old to learn," said Hoel tauntingly; "for one who would gain favor with the fair sex must learn that there is a difference between trying to steal a kiss and trying to seize a bullock by the horns."

"Iolo Goch being of a disposition to resent rather than to enjoy a joke when its object was himself made no effort to conceal his displeasure at the merriment he had caused; nor did he fully recover his good humor during the rest of the evening.

It was about an hour after Iolo Goch's discomfiture that Einion ap Howel informed the company that he understood that there was a penillion singer of no mean ability in the hall, and said that he doubted not that they would be very glad to hear him sing. A murmur of applause showed that he had not mistaken the mood of the crowd, and while many curious eyes scanned the faces of those sitting around the chieftain, Hoel's companion arose and said with assumed modesty,

"The lord of Colsul means well, and I humbly thank him for the compliments he has kindly condescended to pay me; but I fear he has raised your expectations too high. Singing with the harp as you all know is an art peculiar to the Welsh, and demands a musical skill which few can hope to acquire."

"It is not a speech that we want, but singing," put in the chieftain. "Nor do we want any apologies."

"Good, ay, let us have penillion singing," echoed the crowd. "His lordship knows exactly what we want."

"Penillion singing you shall have then," was the reply; "but I warn you against expecting too much."

"Ednyved," said the landlord, addressing one of his harpers, "you accompany him on your harp, and if he succeeds in confusing you I shall be greatly surprised. Remember that the honor of Gwynedd is at stake."

It was one of the peculiarities of penillion singing that the singer and the harper were placed much in the relation of enemies to each other, the one doing his best to confuse the other, or put him out of tune. This was well understood by the harper on this occasion, and with the confidence of an expert player he commenced a popular air, the singer sounding not a single note until the harper had played through several bars. Then he struck in with a suddenness and volume of voice well calculated to confuse the harper, especially as he was designedly as far as possible from the key. The one, however, was a match for the other, and after crossing and recrossing each other for some time they ended the stanza in the most approved style, and in perfect harmony. The harper commenced again, holding his own against the sudden outburst of the singer, and playing the air in good time, and without a single false note, while the singer allowed his voice to wander hither and thither, high and low, only to return to the key in time to end the stanza with the tune. The third time the harper was put out of tune, greatly to the amusement of the company, but he had his revenge during the singing of the fifth stanza, as he succeeded in disconcerting his antagonist. Thus the evening wore on, the performers displaying as much good humor as skill, and the merry company manifested unabated interest. When the singer sat down there was no lack of applause or congratulations. Even the landlord admit-

ted that the Hwntw had acquitted himself in the most admirable manner, but not until Einion ap Howel had expressed his appreciation of the performance both of the harper and the singer.

Much as the chieftain would like to have prolonged his stay at the inn he now tore himself away, and was followed into the street by Hoel and his disguised companion. Then presently the latter, much to the delight of the now hilarious guests, re-entered the tavern, while Einion ap Howel and his attendants proceeded to Rhuddlan Castle. The harper who had been at rest during the penillion singing, was now entertaining the company with a medley of Welsh airs. But an occasional titter among the young, and an occasional burst of laughter from the half-intoxicated, followed by cries for silence, indicated that some at least were but indifferently entertained. This was due not so much to a lack of bardic skill on the part of the performer as to the preoccupation or silly mood of some of the company. When at length the bard paused, the general hum of voices was resumed, and various superstitions associated with Christmas eve were discussed. In those dark days, and for centuries later, it was generally believed that during the holy season "the bird of dawning" exerted his power throughout the night, and that no spirit ventured to walk abroad. There were some also who insisted that the cattle kneel on Christmas morning in homage to the child of Bethlehem. When the guests at the inn had spent some time discussing these and kindred superstitions, Hoel suggested "singing under the eaves" as a diversion. According to this ancient custom among the Welsh, festive occasions, especially in the halls of the nobility, were enlivened during the night by one bard going outside to sing and play under the eaves,

while the other remaining near the fire answered his less fortunate brother. It was decided who should go out by casting lots; but the bards had to exchange places in case the one on the outside composed a better stanza than the one on the inside, the guests being the judges.

As the night was very cold, neither of the bards favored Hoel's suggestion, ostensibly because the custom belonged more to the halls of the great than to an inn, but really because each feared that he would be the one to go out in the cold. The guests, however, to whom the suggestion was most acceptable forced the bards into compliance with their desire, promising that the competition should not last very long. The lot falling on the bard who had taken part in the penillion singing, he accordingly stationed himself outside near the door, and accompanying himself on the harp he sang in a loud voice as follows:—

“ The stars are making love to me,
And great is my resentment ;
Fair lasses there I wish to see,
And share their sweet contentment.”

To this the bard inside the inn loudly replied,

“ Heed not the stars, go ask the moon
Thy loneliness to pity ;
No doubt she'll smile upon thee soon,
If thou but sing a ditty.”

After this bardic banter had lasted so long that the shivering bard without began to despair of being able to surpass his antagonist, the company within came to the agreeable conclusion that his wit entitled him to a place near the fire, and the other bard reluctantly sta-

tioned himself outside and sang and played until he also was so overcome with the cold that he could perform his task only with the greatest difficulty. He felt, as his fellow-bard had also felt, that the flow of ideas and words was not so easy in a frosty atmosphere as it was by a cheery fire. Hence he was glad when the guests not only gave a decision in his favor, but also declared themselves sufficiently satisfied with the whole performance in bring it to a close.

It was past midnight when the half-frozen bard resumed his place by the fire, and he found a hornful of steaming mead particularly acceptable at this time. As he sipped his beverage he noticed that several of the men had imbibed so freely that they now lay on the rush-covered floor in a drunken sleep. Not a few of the women also now, that the excitement of the bardic contest was over, began to show signs of drowsiness, although they had scarcely more than tasted either cwrw (ale) or mead. They were as unaccustomed to sitting up all night as they were to spending an evening away from home. Nor would they have consented to spend Christmas eve in a tavern with their husbands and lovers had not their ancestors done so from time immemorial, or to stay till morning had it not suited their convenience to do so, as they were, in conformity to an old Welsh custom called *plygain*, or the crowing of the cock, in the habit of congregating with all other parishioners that were able to attend in the cathedral at St. Asaph,

CHAPTER III.

The Royal Banquet.

Christmas day, which is ever fraught with much to gladden the hearts of men, found the Vale of Clwyd clad in a mantle of pure whiteness decked with innumerable frosty gems, which, in the brightness of the morning sun sparkled gloriously like so many rare jewels. As it lay like a sleeping child in its cradle of hills, only those accustomed to its loveliness could discern in its winter attire the least trace of the tranquil beauty which charmed the admiring rambler in spring and summer. A cold, sharp wind blew from the sea, and moaned among the snow-covered branches of the giant oaks and tall evergreens which dotted the valley, and stood guard on the hills, while the river, quietly yet successfully struggling against the encroachments of the frost, constantly murmured as it glided by pastoral hills and ancient groves, or hid among the reeds and willows, or meandered through the localities made dear and sacred to the heart of Cambria by the triumphs or defeats of her brave sons. Near the confluence of the rivers Clwyd and Elwy, and a few miles north of the hermit's cave stood Rhuddlan Castle, a crude fortress built, according to some of the leading authorities, by Llewelyn ap Sitsyllt, and now occupied by his illustrious son Gryffydd. The castle as it now stood possessed neither architectural beauty nor grandeur, being a low, long-roofed structure of red stone with a round tower of the same material, surrounded on three sides by a strong

wall and a trench of considerable dimensions, and protected on the other by the royal barracks and the river. Compared with the palatial residences of the great in modern times it was indeed a poor abode for a king; but in that half-civilized age, when the common people lived in rude huts made of branches woven together, and when nearly all of the nobility and gentry dwelt in low, clumsy buildings of timber, not a few of the vassal chiefs regarded it with a twinge of envy. Like all the princely dwellings of the period in Wales the castle was divided into nine apartments, of which the hall was the most spacious and important. In the center of the apartment, between two of the six wooden columns which supported the roof, and near the screens extended across the room, a large fire sent cloudy billows of smoke in search of the opening which served for a chimney. The hall, decorated for the occasion with evergreens, was already well filled with guests, and new arrivals were being constantly announced. In the upper part near the fire sat king Gryffydd with his two sons, his two half-brothers, nine of his officers, and the most distinguished guests; in the lower part sat four of the other officers of the court with the less distinguished guests and members of the household. The queen and princess were not present, as they were assigned by court etiquette to an adjoining apartment. The most conspicuous as well as most dignified personage in the hall was the king. Though slightly built, and below the average in stature, his fiery eye, strong nose, and firm lips pronounced him both noble and royal. Like most of his courtiers he was clad in a tunic of white linen cloth, and in common with the other princes present his neck was adorned with the Eurdorchawg, or chain of twisted gold links. The circlet of gold which intermingled with his long, deep red hair, and the superior quality and workmanship of

his armlets and anklets declared him monarch of all Wales. Near the king on the left sat the chaplain of the court, a middle aged man of keen perception and scholarly habits, who deplored the spiritual degeneracy of the times, and the dense ignorance of the masses. Next to him, also in a seat of honor, was the judge of the court, whose duty it was to decide in matters pertaining to the royal family and court. On the floor directly in front of the king sat a youth who kept Gryffydd's feet warm by chafing them, and by wrapping them in his mantle. Among those on the king's right, Meredith and Ithel, who bore some resemblance to their royal father, claimed no little attention, one being the prince royal, and the other the ruler of the household, upon whom devolved the care of the royal family in the absence of the king. Both were surrounded by a number of the younger princes and nobles, prominent among whom was Trahaiarn ap Caradoc, a nephew of Bleddyng ap Cynvyn, the elder of Gryffydd's half-brothers. This young prince was tall and graceful, with dark hair and eyes denoting a mixture of Celt and Euskarian, and a strong, pleasant face suggestive of thoughtfulness and determination. In close proximity to him at the head of ten other bards of note, sat the family bard tuning his harp, and occasionally casting an anxious glance in the direction of the door. Presently the head steward, whose duty it was to see that the officers of the court were properly seated as well as to superintend the feast, observing the family bard's anxiety approached him and whispered,

"That anxious look ill becomes thee, Idwal, on a gala day like this. What ails thee man? Cheer up."

"Then thou carest not for the bad omen," was the sullen reply. "Seest thou not that one of the twelve is lacking?"

"Ah! I had forgotten," said the steward, lifting his hand nervously to his forehead. "I have so much to think about that it almost makes me distracted. I received word a moment ago that Cadwallon was suddenly taken ill this morning, and therefore cannot come. That, however, need give thee no trouble. Thou seest that aged man sitting next to Einion ap Howel?"

"Ay," said the bard indifferently.

Einion says that he is a celebrated bard from the North, and brings the greetings of his chief to the court of Gryffydd. Wilt thou have him occupy the vacant place?"

"It should be filled by a Welshman and not by a Scot!"

"But he is not a Scot. He is a son of Cambria, and of noble birth, forced into exile by the jealousy of Howel ap Edwin. The death of his enemy makes it safe for him to visit his native land."

"If he bear proper credentials he may complete our number. Yet I would that Cadwallon had chosen some other time in which to be sick, that we might avoid the necessity of giving his place to a stranger."

This short conference presently resulted in the elevation of the aged bard, whose acquaintance the reader has already formed, to the vacant seat, greatly to his own satisfaction and to the family bard's relief.

"If I mistake not," said Einion ap Howel in a whisper to the steward as that functionary was passing on his way to the kitchen, "Idwal will find a formidable rival in the bard from the North. But that is his business, and mine at present is to remind thee that I did not leave my appetite at home this morning."

"I should have known that without being reminded, for who ever heard of Einion ap Howel attending a feast without his appetite?" was the laughing reply.

Finding all the preparations now complete the steward ordered the feast to be spread, and to the delight of the hungry guests large silver dishes containing beef, mutton, venison, and goat's flesh were placed on mats laid on the floor in different parts of the room by the cook and his assistants, professional waiters being then unknown among the Welsh. Other dishes followed containing bread and sweet herbs. Then after a blessing was pronounced by the chaplain in Latin, the majority of the guests helped themselves with a will, while the steward waited on the king, Meredith and Ithel, the chief falconer, the foot-bearer, and the most distinguished among the guests. When the last course was served the king himself, in conformity to an ancient custom of his people, handed the cook his allowance of food, and taking a comprehensive view of the hall a satisfied look rested on his face as he remarked to his chaplain with a twinkle in his eye,

"Were ecclesiastical dishes as inviting as these, dost thou think, Morgan, that the clergy would find it difficult to keep their hearers awake?"

"The trouble lies not in the dishes, my liege, nor in those that prepare them, but in a lack of spiritual appetite. The lust of the flesh is more agreeable to man than the words of the spirit. The stomach and not the brain is nearest the heart. As the mouth is larger than the ear things find readier access into it."

As the chaplain spoke he held a large slice of beef in his hand, and the king noticing this said laughing,

"Let it not be said that all preachers fail to support their teachings with practice. If the flesh be our royal chaplain's enemy he certainly loves his enemy."

"And if the example be good may not Gryffydd ap Llewelyn make it royal by always loving his enemies?" was the significant reply.

"A good suggestion and one I shall act upon at once," said the king still speaking in a light vein. "Saidst thou not the other day that the great Alexander was killed by drink? Alexander was a king, and if drink killed him it must have been his enemy, and if it was his enemy, it must be mine, for I am also king. Yet I love this enemy as a Norman knight does his lady fair."

To corroborate his words the king took his hirlas, or drinking-horn from the steward's hand, and raised it to his lips. And all the guests followed his example. As the mead, ale, morat, and wine circled round the chief falconer alone was compelled to drink with moderation. The regulations of the court assigned him only a small allowance lest he neglect his birds. The others present exercised their privilege to the farthest limit, and soon became so noisy and hilarious that the *gostegwr*, an officer whose duty it was to preserve order in the court, had to interfere. Nor did he succeed in restoring order until the sound produced by his official staff as it struck the wooden column near the chaplain, compelled them to obey or pay a heavy fine. Finding at last an opportunity for which he had longed for some time, the master musician now sang, according to an established custom, one song to God and one to the king, accompanying himself with the harp. Being adjudged the best among many competitors in a literary and musical contest, his position in the court was a high one, and his songs were received with enthusiastic applause. He was followed by the family bard who, stimulated by a desire to excel the master musician, sang and played three songs on different subjects, greatly to the delight of the king and his courtiers. As the applause died away Einion ap Howel cast a significant glance at the aged bard in Cadwallon's seat, as much as to say, "Now is your opportunity; improve it to the utmost." His eyes met with an

assuring look, and when a moment later the king requested a song from "the venerable bard from the North" a smile of satisfaction lighted the imposter's face; but it was only for a second, for the task before him required his whole thought and energy. After tuning his harp to his satisfaction he sang and played as follows:

'O thou, who in space flashing orbs has suspended
The angels to guide till their missions are ended;
Whose voice rends the heavens; whose breath into madness
The deep stirs and fills the brave sailors with sadness;
Whose wisdom bids secrets come forth from their hiding,
And wonders o'erwhelm the conceit of the worldling;
My spirit bid fly to the loftiest conceptions,
My accents attune to praise glorious exceptions

"Of all the bright gems now adorning the night,
The earth is the brightest, most full of delight;
Of all the fair lands fanned by breezes and gales,
The fairest, the dearest, most glorious is Wales;
Of all the brave warriors, O Fame, in thy halls,
The bravest has Cambria to answer her calls;
Of all the great monarchs whose praises we sing,
The greatest, the noblest is Gryffydd the king.

"The wealth of the nations comes to him in ships,
He speaks, and the multitudes hang on his lips;
His armies advance like a strong rushing sea,
Their strength is his word and their glory is he;
His going like the sun's is in splendor and might,
His tread is the lion's when entering the fight;
His sword when he strikes like his eyes flashes fire,
The foe like an aspen leaf quakes at his ire.

"False princes he conquered when treason was rife,
His arm has delivered fair Cambria from strife;

Deheubarth and Gwynedd and Powys are one,
The crown that unites them is Gryffydd's alone;
A terror to Saxon and Dane is his name,
A rock of defense are his valor and fame;
Defeat never clouded his heart nor his brow,
Victorious his weapons, successful his plow.

"The sky of his prospects is cloudless and bright,
No blast shall the flower of his hopes ever blight;
To ages unborn his brave deeds shall be known,
And like Cader Idris firm shall be his throne;
The child on the hearth shall with joy lisp his name,
The warrior shall make it as guide unto fame;
And princes shall emulate Gryffydd the king,
And bards shall forever his praise love to sing."

The thunder of applause which followed this song showed a degree of enthusiasm which neither the master musician nor the family bard had been able to arouse. Various causes combined to produce this result. The song, both in composition and execution, would have been highly pleasing to Gryffydd's court at any time, and especially was it so now that the banquet had reached a stage where everything which in the least tickled the fancy of the guests was greeted with applause. Yet we must not think that genuine appreciation of the song or the singer was the only reason for applause on this occasion. There were some whose secret hostility to the king made any degree of sympathy with the sentiments embodied in the song impossible. Foremost among these was Einion ap Howel. True, he applauded as enthusiastically as any; he did so however, simply because of the successful manner in which the pseudo-bard, who was now known to the court as Idris, had acted his part. Einion had watched the king's countenance during the execution of the song and what he read there assured

him of success. Although reserved at first, the king had gradually yielded to his vanity, and the gold bracelet with which he now rewarded Idrys, showed that he was not proof against flattery.

Idrys received this token of royal favor with no little inward exultation; but Idwal, the family bard, regarded the whole transaction with a jealous heart and angry frowns, and bubbling over with displeasure he whispered in the sympathetic ear of Prince Trahaiarn,

"It is a pity that that base flatterer and his harp are not in the bottom of the sea!"

"Who is he?" was the reply.

"An audacious vagabond whose only employment is to tickle the ear of royalty with empty compliments, and pat hospitality on the back that he might not share the fate of the prodigal of old."

"Then why is he in Cadwallon's place?" continued the prince, whose ignorance on this point was due to his absence from the hall at the time Idrys was installed in the sick man's place.

"He claims to be a Welshman, and the chief bard of some Highland chief, and the king, at the recommendation of Einion ap Howel—may the dogs of perdition overtake the malicious wretch—invited him to occupy the vacant seat," said Idwal, failing to state that his own anxiety had been the occasion of the king's action.

"He may be what he claims to be," said Trahaiarn, glancing in the direction of Idrys, "but I would be willing to swear by St David that I have heard him sing before, yet where I cannot tell."

"Thou mayst have heard him in a hundred places, and be none the wiser," continued Idwal sullenly. "The conceited ass! What does he know about the poetic glow which immortalized Taliesin and Llywarch Hen?

Like others of his kind he has brayed so often that he can do it to perfection."

Although in no mood to sing, the disaffected bard was summoned at this juncture to the queen's apartments to entertain Princess Nest with one of his medleys, and as he left the room Idrys looked after him with an uxulant air while tuning his harp for another song. Then glancing at the king he favored the court with another selection. The song was entitled "The Exile's Return," and in it he described his longing for his Cambrian home, the hardships and dangers of his journey homeward, his rapturous joy at seeing the land of his fathers once more, and the kind providence that led him to the festal hall of Cambria's greatest king. So well did he perform his part that he again received most hearty applause. His triumph now was complete so far as gaining the favor of the court was concerned; but the most difficult part of his undertaking still remained to be executed. He was wondering whether he could not expedite the accomplishment of his cherished purpose by endeavoring to supplant the family bard, when the king more from a desire to please his own vanity than to honor his bardic guest sent the steward to him with the request that he prolong his stay at the court at least until the festivities were over, and greatly elated at his good fortune he remarked,

"The son of Llewelyn is as gracious as he is brave and wise. His humble servant will not despise his request."

He could afford to be generous now; therefore giving the other bards an opportunity to entertain the guests, he indulged more freely in the tempting drinks, whose effects had already overcome not a few of the banqueters.

CHAPTER IV.

Whims and Prejudices.

While the festal hall was thus made the scene of revelry and bardic display, the queen's apartment was comparatively quiet. It was not so large as the hall, and its walls were not so bare, womanly ingenuity having decorated them with silk hangings richly embroidered and with wreaths and festoons of holly, ivy, and ferns. Its scant furniture also, which betrayed Saxon and Norman rather than Cambrian tastes, was rendered more attractive by finely wrought decorations of needlework. The floor was carpeted with a layer of rushes, with here and there an oriental rug, the gift of some ardent crusader. Not far from the window, through whose gray glass the rays of the setting sun strayed with difficulty into the room, a small circular table with curiously carved legs stood, and between this and the window, facing Idwal, the family bard, sat Princess Nest on a sort of divan. Her girlish looks told of no more than fifteen years of life; and yet even at that age she possessed no small degree of the womanly charms that distinguished her later. Her finely cut features, like her hair which fell in deep red waves over her shoulders, showed a marked paternal resemblance. Her clearness of complexion together with dark blue eyes that seemed in moments of emotional play to reveal unfathomable depths, vied with a mouth that could smile a stubborn heart into submission, or pronounce a death sentence upon an enemy. Her figure, though somewhat diminutive, was well formed;

ness in her voice, and two bright spots burned on her cheeks. Fearing that he had gone too far the bard hastened to reply:—

“I charge not my royal master with ingratitude, or affirm that another has supplanted me. Yet having a human heart and some knowledge of the ways of men, I not unnaturally thought that some who so enthusiastically applauded that contemptible minstrel would gladly see him in my place.”

“You certainly have a vivid imagination,” said Nest, discovering the real cause of Idwal’s trouble, “but that is a privilege of bards, I suppose. I myself heard the thunder of applause which greeted the bard from the North, but to me it meant nothing more than a recognition of his skill.”

“Hadst thou seen the expression on the faces of some when his majesty rewarded him with that bracelet, thou wouldest have arrived at a different conclusion,” said Idwal, still nursing his jealousy.

“Was Prince Trahaiarn pleased with the song?”

“As pleased as the majority of those who heard it. He has heard the minstrel before during some of his many wanderings.”

“Did the prince say that he is a minstrel? I thought he was a bard; indeed the steward told me so.”

“He was presented to the court as a bard from the North,” said Idwal, with a secret grudge against the steward and Einion ap Howel for introducing Idrys to public favor; “but how can he be from the North while the prince has heard him in Wales? And how can he be a bard if he wanders from place to place.”

“It may be that the prince is mistaken. None of us have an infallible memory. Besides he certainly is not a stranger to the muse. Yet whatever he is, you need not fear.”

With this assurance the bard now left the room, and the next moment the queen entered from another apartment. She was a little taller than the princess, but similarly dressed, and as she swept into the room her beautiful face and proud carriage plainly showed that she fully realized the dignity of her position. Her beauty, unlike that of the princess, was of the proverbial Saxon type, she being the daughter of Algar, Earl of Chester. Her Saxon origin and training also account for the foreign aspect of the room, as well as certain prejudices which the reader will in due time discover. The princess was her step-daughter, she being king Gryffydd's second wife. Consequently there was not that perfect confidence and sympathy between the two that should exist between mother and daughter.

As the princess' mind was lost in reflection on what had just transpired between herself and Idwal, the queen attracted not her attention, until, having seated herself at a short distance from the window, she startled her by saying with a faint attempt at a smile,

"I hope, daughter, you have been duly entertained by your favorite bard. The few strains that reached my ears were certainly enchanting, and it is no wonder you discoursed so long about the superior merits of his music!"

An ominous flush on the princess' cheeks showed how deeply she felt this sarcastic remark, and obeying the impulse of her Celtic heart she hotly replied,

"If Idwal's music were distasteful to me, I also would deny him my presence, and I would hug the outside of the door so closely that none of his 'enchanting strains' would reach my ears! But being the daughter of Gryffydd the Bold, I am not so enslaved to his Saxon wife that I need to dismiss my bard to please her whims."

"Indeed!" was the haughty reply. "My lord the king

is surely to be congratulated on having such a daughter, and his 'Saxon wife' is to be pitied as a weakling whose foreign ways and accomplishments are as shadows in comparison with the strong character and exquisite tastes of such a noble princess!"

"Wales wastes no pity on such weaklings," was the parting fling of the princess as she abruptly left the room. Her sudden move was less a surprise to the queen than of consternation to the maids of honor, several of whom narrowly escaped being caught listening in the next room. Upon reaching an apartment devoted exclusively to her own use, therefore, the princess found her favorite maid as flushed as herself; but that wily maiden was quick-witted enough to cover her trepidation by remarking with feigned resentment,

"You will not deny, my lady Nest, that, though less fortunate than yourself, I am a true daughter of Wales."

"That is certainly a strange conceit," said the princess, fixing a searching look on the maid's face. "What ever put it into thy head, Enid? If I had any doubt on that subject, dost thou think I would for a moment allow thee to remain here?"

"Having a Welsh heart, then, is it a sin to resent the insults of those who love neither our country nor our customs?"

"Not a sin surely," replied the princess, thinking of the sharp words she had just exchanged with Queen Althy. "But thou mayest be certain that those who utter such insults are no saints."

"So I thought but a moment ago when her majesty's maid Rowena was making all manner of fun of Idwal, and said that the best bard of Wales is not fit to hold a taper to the poorest minstrel of England."

"And did the impious hoiden dare to say that? Had I heard her it would have gone ill with her. Who but a

base Saxon who knows not the difference between a crow and a nightingale, would have the audacity to mention a Saxon minstrel in the same breath with a Welsh bard? Did I love the night better than the day I might laugh at those who praise the brightness of the sun, or had I not a king for a father I might give homage to a beggar! Minstrels indeed! worthless and dissolute strollers were a more fitting name; for, do they not debauch and murder a beautiful art to maintain an idle and dissipated course of life?"

Enid, satisfied with the success of her ruse, listened with marked attention to the remarks of the princess; but when the latter paused she showed no anxiety to continue the subject. She rather sought to put her young mistress in a better humor, a task which to her was not a very difficult one. Hence a few minutes later she had the princess laughing heartily and chatting good-naturedly about matters of but little importance to any but themselves.

Meanwhile Rowena was trying to pacify the queen, but found it not an easy undertaking: Aldyth hated the thought that any one dared to differ with her, or to refuse her the homage which her pride exacted. Princess Nest was an eye-sore to her, because her Welsh whims would not yield to her English prejudices. Yet there were occasions when the two seemed to be on the best of terms, but they were occasions when national differences were kept in the background.

CHAPTER V.

Treason.

The arrival of twelfth-night put an end to the Christmas festivities, greatly to the relief of the head-steward and the cook, to say nothing of the hosts of servants at their command. The guests, however, did not depart till the next day. Einion ap Howel was among the last to leave, and also among the most effusive in his commendation of the king's hospitality, and of Idris' musical skill. He had exchanged but few words with the latter during the period of feasting, owing to prudential reasons. Though he was in full sympathy with the plot of which Idris' bardic performance constituted only a subordinate part, he also wished to avoid giving the king the least ground of suspicion that he had the remotest connection with it. Neither he nor Idris, however, would be compromised by a secret interview, which, now that the feast was at an end, was a possibility uppermost in the minds of each as they shook hands amidst the general leave-taking. Nor did Einion betray the least surprise when Idris with a view to a private meeting left a crumpled note in his hand, and walked away without taking farther notice of him.

The arrangements which followed were entirely satisfactory to Idris. A horse would be placed at his disposal not far from the entrance to the castle, and he was to spur at the proper time in the direction of the hermit's cave, where he would be safe from all pursuers until such time as he might deem it prudent to seek his own hall.

Idrys much pleased with Einion's hearty support, returned after the interview to the castle in the best humor, and found the king sitting on a large cushion near the fire, surrounded by his officers and one or two other favorites. Idwal's place was vacant, a circumstance which Idrys regarded as an auspicious sign, and it was with no little inward pleasure that he seated himself on the unoccupied cushion at Gryffydd's request. His position afforded him a full view of the king's face, but his well-feigned bashfulness seldom allowed his eyes to meet the piercing gaze which the king fixed on his. Nor did he slight so favorable an opportunity to ingratiate himself still further into royal favor. His mind was well stored with the popular songs of the period, and he soon gave new proofs of his skill in the choice of his selections no less than in their successful rendering. Now he was all excitement describing the chase; anon he passionately sang of beauty and love. Nor did he slight the warrior and the priest; his awen (bardic genius) being equally at home in the strife of arms and in the scenes of peace.

"Being a master of thine art," said the king at length, "perhaps thou canst favor us with one of Llywarch Hen's unrivaled songs. Dost thou know 'Maenwyn's Song?'"

"In former days ere I was forced to leave my native land, I had no greater favorite, but many a year of sorrow and joy has come and gone since I sang it last. Nevertheless if my memory deal not treacherously with me, I will sing it to the court."

Having said this, Idrys' fingers ran lightly for a moment over the harp strings, while his head was bent as if in deep meditation; then he sang and played as follows:

THE SONG OF MAENWYN.

"Maenwyn! when a youth of might,
He who me or mine did slight,
Found me ready for the fight,

Maenwyn! when opposing thee,
With my youth to succor me,
Woe to him who was too free.

Maenwyn! when I thee pursued,
With the zeal of youth imbued,
Foes in fear my favor sued.

Maenwyn! when so full of life,
And so fond of arms and strife,
Valiant deeds with me were rife.

Maenwyn wise! come, aim thee still,
Fools of wisdom need their fill,
Maenwyn needs thee, do his will.

Sheathed my sword shall now be borne,
Sharp its tempered point like thorn,
Whetting ne'er deserves one's scorn.

From the vale of Meirion came
Blade of steel—ne'er was the same,
In my hand it seemed a flame.

Blest the hag who in the past
Who at thy feet the warning cast,
Maenwyn! hold thy dagger fast."

Never had even Llywarch Hen a more appreciative audience than Idrys had on this occasion. The song was just the kind to touch the Celtic heart, and the king's eyes were more than once observed to glare as they always did in battle. Prince Trahaïarn also, who sat next to Gryffydd's younger son beheld a look in Idrys' eyes as he stole a glance at the king that bespoke the tiger rather than the lamb, and he resolved to keep a close watch on his movements for the remainder of the evening. By putting certain facts together he became more and more impressed that Idrys' presence in

Rhuddlan castle boded no good. Idrys, however, ignorant of all this, took the proffered cup from the steward's hand with a bow, and appeared to be much delighted with the attention paid him. In his soul, however, he was longing to see some at least of the officers in the hall depart that he might have freer access to the door. His heart was burning with hate, and he yearned to avenge his father's death. As if in compliance with his will the chaplain and the judge, who sat in the order named next to the king, obtained a short leave of absence at this juncture on the plea of pressing business, while the steward was summoned to the kitchen where the cook desired to see him concerning certain culinary supplies, the recent feasting having taxed the royal stores rather more heavily than had been expected. But there were still too many in the hall to suit Idrys' purpose, and he decided to summon ventriloquism, of which he had some knowledge, to his aid. The next moment the hall was filled with a strange mixture of sounds—falcons quarrelling, horses neighing and dogs barking. Amazement was seen in every face, and the grand falconer, the chief groom, and the head hunstman looked with staring eyes and open mouths towards the doors, as if wondering what would happen next. The king, however, soon reminded them of their duty.

"Are ye riveted to your cushions, ye fools?" said he, red with rage. "Wilt thou sit there with thy mouth open like an Idiot, thou stupid son of Edwyn until my birds tear themselves to pieces? And you worthless varlets—"

The king did not finish the sentence, for the offenders were already out of hearing; his look, however, which had watched them out of the room still showed his displeasure, when Idrys suddenly sprang upon him like a lion upon his prey, and his uplifted hand grasping a gleaming dagger was about to inflict a deadly wound

when Prince Trahaiarn seized his arm from behind. A desperate struggle ensued between the two, while several rushed to the prince's assistance, shouting "treason" at the top of their voices. Nor was Gryffydd a mere spectator, but springing to his feet with the agility of a tiger he seized Idris' beard with one hand and unsheathed his sword with the other, while his eyes gleamed with rage. But the would be regicide slipped like an eel from their grasp, leaving his false beard in the king's hand, and his wig in the hand of the prince, and bounded toward the door through which he rushed, knocking down the astonished doorkeeper with his fist. Then stimulated by the sound of pursuing footsteps he ran blindly toward the drawbridge, stumbling over a prostrate form as he went. Where was the palfrey? Could he ever find it? Ah! What a relief! That whinny guided him to the means of escape! To mount was but the work of a moment, to gallop away towards Cefn was mere play.

Reaching a point in the road opposite to St. Asaph the fear of capture soon ceased to be harassing. Yet the rider allowed not his horse to slacken his speed. Nor did his success in fleeing from the grasp of his enemies occupy his mind so much as his failure to carry out his murderous intent. As we might expect, Trahaiarn came in for his full share of the blame, and as he sped along the disappointed Idris ground his teeth with rage, and mentally added the prince to those already on the black list. Reaching a point in the road opposite to St. Asaph he suddenly reined in his horse, and after a moment's pause he heard the hoot of an owl close by, to which he responded immediately. The next instant a man emerged from a bush by the roadside, and Idris dismounting held a hasty consultation with him. There the confederate mounted the palfrey and spurred in the direction of St. Asaph, where the main road now led,

while Idrys cautiously followed a less frequented road in the direction of Cefn. As a thaw had set in the day before the snow had everywhere disappeared, except along the hedges and at the base of the precipice in the neighborhood of the hermit's cave. The sky also had assumed a threatening aspect, and the dark clouds which hovered above the fleeing Idrys made it extremely difficult for him to see the road. He had no fear of being captured now, but as he stumbled on in the extreme darkness that enveloped him and his surroundings, he was very anxious to reach the cave that had previously sheltered him. Had he been mounted his progress would have been somewhat easier; but as it was his feet seemed to find every stone in the road, and his face every stray briar or twig that hung over the roadside. Owing to these aggravations and the miscarriage of his iniquitous plan he was in no gracious mood when he heard the murmuring sound of the river Elwy, and began to grope for the path that he expected would conduct him safely to the hermit's cave. At length he found what he imagined was the object of his search, and leaving the road he began to follow the path with some degree of confidence. He had gone but a short distance, however, when there was a sharp cry immediately followed by a heavy thud. The path had led him to the edge of a precipice, and he had fallen over it.

CHAPTER VI.

Alarm and Pursuit.

Gryffydd ap Llewelyn was not more surprised at the suddenness and boldness of Idrys' murderous intention than he was at the manner in which he made his escape. For an instant he and Prince Trahaiarn looked in blank astonishment at each other, while wonder mingled with alarm marked the faces of those around them. But Idrys had scarcely reached the door when all made a simultaneous rush in the same direction, the king true to his habit and instinct taking the lead. But the effort to seize the traitor was as futile as it was hurried. The next thing to be done was to send out a searching party, which left the castle early the next morning under the leadership of Prince Trahaiarn.

Before making a thorough search of the region (in which he now found himself), the prince decided to proceed first to the hermit's cave, and secondly, in case he should find no clew to the whereabouts of Idrys there, to the Cathedral of St. Asaph. He was led to make this decision by his knowledge of the fact that no criminal, however culpable, would fail to find refuge in any of the churches or monasteries of the period, providing he had money enough to bribe the officials. Nor was he very hopeful of success in his present enterprise, knowing as he did the character of those with whom he had to deal; yet he thought that a chance word or expression might give him at least a hint of what he desired to know. After two or three vain inquiries he led his followers at

a rapid rate in the direction of Cefn, and arriving in due time in front of the hermit's cave, he sought to attract the attention of the recluse. That individual, however, seemed to be in no hurry to appear, for it was not until the prince had exhausted his voice nearly as completely as his patience that he deigned to respond; nor was he in a very amiable mood when he came to the mouth of the cave, as his words showed.

"Who is it that dares to disturb a servant of God at his devotions? These be precious times indeed that even the seclusion of the forests fails to insure freedom from interruption. But the servant is no better than his master; for Christ was tempted of the devil for forty days and forty nights in the wilderness."

Somewhat amused at these remarks, Trahaiarn replied,

"You may consider yourself fortunate, holy father, if the devil of interruption be the only one that molests you. There are those who have reason to believe in the existence of worse devils; Gryffydd ap Llewelyn, for instance, on whose mission I have sought your abode."

"And does his majesty think me one of them, that he sends thee with a band of soldiers to this sacred spot?"

"It is rather his desire, holy father, to have you cast out one that has made himself particularly obnoxious to him of late," said the prince insinuatingly.

"Ah, indeed!" said the recluse, "and where might that devil be? Perhaps thou canst tell me that."

"Be careful, sir priest, else I might shorten your tongue by cutting off your head," exclaimed Trahaiarn, laying his hand on the hilt of his sword. "You know whom we seek, and where he now conceals himself."

"When thou ceasest to speak in riddles, like Samson, I may hope to find a key to thy meaning," was the reply.

"And when you cease to wield, like Samson, the jaw-bone of an ass," said the prince, frowning, "I may hope

to listen to some degree of reason. I suppose you have never known a vile rascal by the name of Idrys."

"Idrys is a common name; yet all I have known, who responded to that name, laid no such claim to being rascals as some bearing other names may."

"Ah! I forgot that you deal only with saints! Yet perchance you have in your time heard something to the effect that while some have entertained angels unawares, others have seen angels in a devil's garb. Perhaps also that you have not wholly forgotten a murderous villain who left your abode in the guise of a bard on Christmas morning!"

"A bard! Ay, ay, I do remember now that a bard from — Ah! from where did he say he came?"

"From the North," said the prince sneeringly.

"From Cornwall," continued the recluse. "A bard from Cornwall sought shelter under my roof, as many a weary traveler does, and I being a Christian, refused him not such comforts as I had to give. The holy saints forbid that I should turn away any who have claim to my hospitality."

"Then perchance your tender heart has again lavished upon him hospitable attentions, and will further show its goodness by admitting myself and five of my followers to his presence," said the Prince, anxious to bring the interview to an end.

"If it be any satisfaction to thee, haughty prince, to see the interior of my abode, I shall make no objection, providing thou dost first show me the king's warrant; but if thou find not the object of thy search blame me not for thy disappointment."

As a matter of form the prince handed the hermit a royal warrant, and after he had read it, followed him into the cave attended by a number of his soldiers. As they entered, the recluse said something in denunciation

of the crime set forth in the warrant, and expressed his willingness to do all he could to help bring the offender to justice. He chid the prince for not informing him on his arrival of the nature of the offense that had brought him there, as that would have prevented many bitter and unnecessary words. Trahaiarn, however, was not carried away by this change in the attitude of the hermit; on the contrary, when, after a fruitless examination of the cave, he and his followers retraced their steps northward, he was more convinced than ever that that wily individual knew where Idrys was concealed. Yet as he had seen nothing amounting to positive proof, and as the recluse had not committed himself in the least, he could not adduce anything of a criminating character.

Upon reaching the bridge that spanned the river Elwy near St. Asaph, the prince struck upon what seemed to be a real clew to the direction which the traitor had taken in his flight. A countryman whom he accosted at this point said that as he was leaving the "Red Dragon" (meaning the tavern previously mentioned) between nine and ten o'clock the previous evening a horse and rider sped by "like a flash of lightning." He wondered what mad freak could have induced any one to ride so fast on such a dark night, and he kept wondering until he happened to hear that very morning of the treacherous attempt upon king Gryffydd's life. He had no doubt now but that the rider of the previous evening was the murderous knave whom they sought, and that he was secreted by the monks in Basingwerk Abbey.

While Trahaiarn listened attentively to all that the countryman said, the only thing that he considered worthy of attention was the statement that a horse had been driven at full speed through St. Asaph, and this was contrary to his conviction. But he was determined to find out how much truth there was in the statement

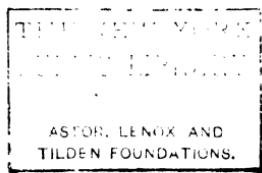
before fixing on any further course of action. He argued that a horse galloping through a town with unusual speed on a dark night was bound to attract the notice of more than one person, and his argument was correct. Upon reaching the town he found that several others had heard what they now supposed to have been the murderous Idrys and his horse fleeing past their homes. This point settled, he now acted on the supposition that the rider instead of continuing on his way to Holywell and seeking an asylum in Basingwerk Abbey, had dismounted a little beyond St. Asaph, and had sought the Cathedral on foot, leaving the horse either in the hands of a confederate, or to find his way home alone. Of course he was mistaken. As the reader already knows, it was not Idrys but a confederate that galloped through the town, and he had no need of ecclesiastical protection.

A short distance to the west of the Cathedral stood the episcopal palace, a rude structure after the style affected by the dignitaries of the period. In one of the rooms, which had the appearance of an office, the Bishop of St. Asaph sat looking over his accounts, and with a pleased expression he read as follows:

"Edwin ap Iorwerth, with a penitent heart, gave Bishop Rhoderic a church and twenty-seven acres of land in exchange for the kingdom of God, and in behalf of his father's soul.

"Iago ap Owen, sick unto death, sacrificed his house and one hundred and sixty-two acres of land to God and Bishop Rhoderic, that he might receive respectable burial and a crown of life.

"Howel ap Morgan and eight of his family, being under the ban of the church for violating her protection by causing Dean Beli to be murdered in the nave, forfeited all their possessions rather than endure the ills of excommunication."



had reached the end of a paragraph. Never a great friend of the proud dignitaries who wrongly called themselves the ambassadors of Christ in that corrupt age, the prince found much difficulty in keeping his Cambrian blood from reaching the boiling point. It was with some degree of sarcasm that he therefore said, when the bishop was ready to listen to him,

"Lest I presume too much in thinking that either my face or my name be known in this reverend presence, it may be best to state that my name is Trahaiarn, and that I am here on the king's business."

"Then," mentally remarked the bishop somewhat disappointed, "my wealth will be none the greater for his being here." Aloud he said, "Thy name is better known than thy business; but my memory is not less capable of retaining the one than my ears are of listening to the other. Thou sayest thy business is touching the king?"

"To be exact, reverend father," said the prince making an effort to be pleasant, "I said I was here on the king's business, and most urgent business it is."

The chaplain now leaving the room, the bishop signified his readiness to listen to what the prince had to say. Accordingly Trahaiarn gave a detailed account of Idrys' treachery and escape, and closed his narrative by asking if the traitor sought protection of the bishop.

"The offender has neither asked nor received protection of me," said the prelate, "and I am glad he has not; for had I given him refuge in the house of God, duty would compel me to shield him, however much my reason would condemn his crime. The protection afforded by the church is far too sacred to be violated, and woe to him who, like Howel ap Morgan, is led by his thirst for vengeance to trespass upon holy ground and desecrate the sanctuary by shedding the blood of him whom God would succor."

"I question not the right of the church to grant protection to the weak and distressed," the prince ventured to observe; "yet having neither the training nor the prejudices, I mean the qualifications, of a priest or bishop, I cannot regard with approval the abuses which, in my humble judgment, are far too prevalent in these times; nor can I persuade myself to believe that an institution intended to promote Christian principles and virtues is justified in offering itself as an asylum for traitors and murderers, and thus foster crime."

The bishop was not a little shocked at this free expression on the part of Trahaiarn, and for a moment he could not decide whether to rebuke his presumption or to pity what he called his ignorance. Then he made a compromise by couching a rebuke in a bit of fatherly advice. The good will of Gryffydd ap Llewelyn, he thought, was better kept than lost; therefore he would treat his representatives with patronizing consideration.

None the wiser for his interview with the bishop, the prince now left the episcopal palace, and rejoining his followers he extended the search to various localities in the neighborhood, but with no success.

CHAPTER VII.

A Strange Hospital.

Being rid of Trahaiarn and his band, the hermit indulged in a suppressed but hearty laugh at their expense, and being well assured in his own mind that they would not return, he left his gloomy abode and entered one of the other caverns in the immediate neighborhood. Unlike his own, this cavern was so small at the mouth that, but for the well worn path leading to it, no one would have thought it to be tenanted. As the hermit well knew, however, it harbored a band of outlaws that had long been a terror to that whole region. At this time also it afforded an asylum to an individual who was in no way identified with the outlaws, and it was to see him rather than the denizens of the woods, with whom by the way he was on the best of terms, that the recluse entered their haunt. No one challenged him as he merged into the cave, but presently upon reaching a group of rough-looking men who were making merry over plundered meats and drinks around a fire of logs, the captain of the band remarked,

"So the hounds have departed no wiser than when they came. I must say that you succeeded admirably in throwing them off the trail. I am of the opinion, however, that it was a mistake not to have led them into this wasp's nest to furnish us a little diversion at their expense."

"Too many diversions are more dangerous than wholesome," said the hermit. "You see what Idrys has come

to by his bold adventure. Had I led the searching party into your hands I fear your temporary triumph would end in Gryffydd's leading his whole army against us. It is better as it is."

The hermit now proceeded to a sort of recess a few feet from the fire, and bending over the unconscious form of Idrys, who lay on a bed of rushes with his head nearly covered with bandages, he remarked to the robber chief who had followed him to the spot,

"Methinks his chances of recovery are few, and they will be still less if I leave him here with you. I must have him removed to my quarters at once. There he shall have all the quiet and care he needs."

"I make no pretension of knowing anything about the healing art," said the outlaw; "but it appears to me that his removal just now would be more injurious to him than the uncontrollable levity of my men. Would it mend matters, think you, to exchange quarters for a few weeks?"

"That would be too much trouble," insisted the hermit. "Besides, it is not necessary. He can be safely borne to my cave, and I choose to have it done immediately."

The robber chief seeing that further argument would be useless, commanded two of his men to bear the injured man to the hermit's abode on a crude stretcher extemporized for the occasion. Rough and cruel as these men were they could at times be as gentle as women, and the recluse had the satisfaction of seeing Idrys presently placed on his own bed by their strong hands. When they were gone he busied himself for a while with the patient, and as he changed the bandages on his head he muttered something about it being a marvel that he was alive, and a fortunate circumstance that he had fallen on the snow that had drifted at the base of the precipice. Though the would-be regicide had received other injuries, none of

them were so serious as the ugly gashes cut in his head by fragments of rock loosened by his fall. His life for several days seemed to hang in the balance, but at length the hermit's skill and unceasing care caused a favorable change, and he began rapidly to improve. The return of consciousness was slower than the hermit had hoped, and there were times when he feared that his patient would never recover his mental soundness. There came a day, however, when Idrys awoke to a realization of his surroundings. The hermit was at the time gazing abstractedly into the fire, and his patient had been silently studying his features by the light of the fire for several minutes, when he startled him by quietly remarking with a smile,

"So I am not dead after all."

"Dead!" exclaimed the hermit leaping to his feet and seizing Idrys' hand with unbounded joy; "by St. Winifred, thou hast more life now than thou hast had for some time. Thou hast been very near death's door, however. Indeed, when I found thee shortly after thy fall, and for several days after that, I thought thee a doomed man."

"That I am not dead, then, holy father, is due to your consummate skill and patient care," gratefully replied Idrys.

"Say rather that the saints have graciously spared thy life and have aided thy recovery, for no skill or care of mine could have helped thee had they been indifferent to thy fate."

"It is gratifying to think that they have not abandoned me. For a while I had a different impression. Me thought I was a dead man and in a place of torment, and that you were the king of the lower regions."

"I inferred as much from some of thy ravings; but thou hast not been nearer Annwn than that fire, and it

was it that gave color to thy delirium. Let it all pass from thy mind now, and try to seek further sleep."

"I will gladly do your bidding, but you must first satisfy my curiosity. Have the hounds been after me?"

"Ay, Prince Trahaiarn at the head of a hundred men or more paid me an early visit on the day after thy fall, with a royal warrant for thy arrest."

"And you threw the accursed whelps off the trail! By my faith, you are a master magician. That hateful up-start, to whose base interference alone I own my failure, will have to rise earlier to be a fit match for you. But how did you succeed in sending him away without his prey?"

"Easy enough. I had thee carried to a neighboring cavern, having a suspicion that almost amounted to conviction that my own quarters would be subject to a close search. Then when the search was over I had thee brought here that I might properly care for thee."

"And well, holy father, have you performed your kindly office; yet if my present feeling be a fit criterion, my bruised frame still needs a few finishing touches. Therefore I will aid your skill by going to sleep."

When Idrys after a long refreshing sleep awoke he found Hoel sitting on the ground beside his bed, and recognizing him as the man whom he had seen with Einion ap Howel at St. Winifred's well, and who had accompanied him to the Red Dragon on Christmas eve, he said,

"What! you here again Hoel? I am glad to see you. I hope however, that you have not come to invite me to accompany you to St. Winifred's well, for I am sorry to say I am not so nimble as I was when we first met."

"Suspecting that you were not quite equal to a pilgrimage to the shrine of our patron saint," was the reply, "I have come rather to give you the benefit of the heal-

ing waters where you are. You may not recognize this drinking horn, but it is the very one from which you drank that day at the well, and a good draught from it will aid your recovery. There is more in that earthen vessel, and you can take it as occasion demands. Our friend, the hermit, will see that you shall not die of thirst, and our patron saint will accompany each draught with her blessing."

"I perceive that your faith in St. Winifred's well is as strong as ever, and that your enthusiasm has not abated in the least," said Idrys, taking the proffered drink. "Your thoughtfulness, I assure you, is not unappreciated."

"I would have brought you some several days ago had not our friend, the hermit, insisted on trying the efficacy of 'Our Lady's Well,' which is only a short distance from here. He is now convinced that it has no virtue compared with St. Winifred's well."

"Do you keep a supply of this water always on hand?"

"Not always. But I shall try to have some on hand by the next time you fall; and if you will inform me in good season just what precipice you expect to fall over next, I shall make it a point to have a large cushion or a hay-rick to receive you."

"How now! what is all this talking about? Shame on you, Hoel, for speaking of another fall before our friend has had time to rub his shins since he had the last. How are you, old boy? I fear you came nearer breaking your neck after all than shedding the tyrant's blood."

These last words were spoken by Einion ap Howel, whose entrance at this juncture was as welcome as it was unexpected. It was by no means his first visit to the hermit's cave since Idrys' fall. It was the first time that Idrys had seen him, however, since he had recovered consciousness.

"I warrant you that Hoel has not failed to remind you of our first meeting," said Einion with a smile.

"No, nor of the virtues of St. Winifred's well," replied Idrys.

"Ha, ha, that is a never-failing topic with him. But has he also informed you that he is the king of these forests, and that he and his subjects are a greater terror to these parts than Owen's ravens were to their tormentors?"

Idrys glanced at Hoel and shook his head.

"Then I am glad to be able to impart that bit of gossip to you myself," continued Einion. "Had you ventured to this region on any other errand than that which brought you here you would doubtless have discovered that fact ere this yourself, and to your sorrow. As it is, he is your friend, and as your friend he met your foe, Trahaiarn, at St. Asaph's bridge on the day after your fall, and started that hateful bloodhound on a false scent."

"Good! I hope that the base sycophant followed it to destruction," vehemently remarked Idris with a scowl.

"He followed it rather to salvation," said Hoel with a coarse laugh, for I saw him enter the palace of his righteous lordship the Bishop of St. Asaph."

"You forget, Hoel, that the bishop's palace leads to perdition as well as to salvation," said Einion; "for his reverence has the key to each, and wields the one that suits his humor best. But there is this advantage; his humor is always good, no matter what the weight of one's sin might be, provided the gold placed in his hand be heavier."

"Then pray that your gold may never be lighter than your sins, if you would keep the bishop in good humor, and yourself from your just deserts," remarked Hoel with a chuckle, and a wink at Idris.

"If my sins were half as heavy as your own," retorted

Einion, "I would go and hang myself. But being of saintly habits I have half a mind to go to a monastery."

"Or to a nunnery," suggested Hoel with a mischievous laugh.

"Just now I would much rather have you go to Rhuddlan Castle," said Idrys, "and see if the usurper wields his tongue with more readiness than he did his sword the night of my adventure."

"Fortunately I have already ascertained what you would know," said Einion with mock solemnity; "for being a loyal subject I hastened with sympathy and congratulations as soon as I heard of the attempt upon his life. Nor did I fail to listen most attentively to a detailed account of the crime from his majesty's lips, or to heap invectives on the head of the dastardly fellow who was guilty of such baseness."

Interrupted at this point by an outburst of uproarious laughter, he threw off his mock solemnity and continued in a lighter vein. "By St. Winifred, it would have been highly amusing to you both to watch the face of our illustrious king as he threatened vengeance on the slayer of his head huntsman. Little did the despicable tyrant know that the hand which grasped his own in token of fidelity as I was leaving, was the very hand that had slain both the courtier and the guards."

"By my faith, Einion, you are the most consummate hypocrite that ever trod the earth," ejaculated Hoel.

"And yet he is scarcely a match for the wily son of Llewelyn," said Idrys. "By all the saints, I am half convinced he could on occasion smile the devil into believing him to be a saint."

"And that, I doubt not, would be more agreeable to the ambitious Gryffydd than to be sung into perdition by another hypocrite in the guise of a bard," said Einion.

The sound of approaching footsteps was now heard,

and the next moment Hoel's lieutenant arrived on the scene. Idrys immediately recognized him as the red-headed, able-bodied individual he had seen at the Red Dragon on Christmas eve. His appearance now was even more formidable than on that occasion, and declared him the cruel outlaw that he was. Calling his chief aside he said in a deep harsh voice, sufficiently toned down by the desire for secrecy not to be distinctly heard by any except Hoel,

"Well, we have returned without any mishap as usual."

"And as usual loaded down with booty, I hope," was the reply.

"Have you ever known of a hunt in which Iolo Goch did not catch his game?" asked his lieutenant with a frown.

"Ay, by my faith," said Hoel with a tantalizing smile; "that, for instance where Betty Lân gave you a box on the ear instead of the honey of her lips when you attempted to kiss her under the mistletoe."

"Tut, tut, Llewelyn's ghost take you, man! I suppose I shall not hear the last of that for the next twenty years, unless someone present you with a torque of hemp! Do you wish to hear my report?"

"Why, man, have I not been waiting for it till my patience is nearly exhausted? If you dally much longer I will have you strung up to the first tree we come to."

"This torque of gold suits me much better than a torque of hemp just now; though its rightful owner would, no doubt, be only too glad to give me the latter in its stead. Is it not a beauty?"

"Ay, by St. Winifred, and a most royal one! Let me have it. There! how does that look?"

"It now graces the neck of a true chief, though Cadogan of Talacre might not think so. But he ought to be

thankful that we did not cut his throat in relieving him of so valuable an ornament."

"He may not fare so well another time. But is that all you have to show for your trouble?"

"No, we left Cadogan poorer by fifty head of cattle, also, and a score of his best horses."

Much pleased with his lieutenant's report Hoel now dismissed the latter, and not long after left the hermit's cave accompanied by Einion ap Howel. Idris thus found himself alone, and began to meditate further mischief. His late mishap instead of cooling his ardor made him more anxious than ever to avenge his father's death. But the unsuccessful issue of his first attempt made it necessary for him to adopt a new scheme. He was trying to think what role he should next adopt when the hermit entered the cave.

"What! art thou alone?" said the latter with a look of surprise. "I left Hoel with thee while I paid a short visit to St. Asaph."

"Hoel left a moment ago, doubtless on some pressing matter of business, as Iolo Goch came to consult him about something," was Idris' prompt reply.

"I cannot blame him for not staying longer," continued the hermit, "for I promised to return much sooner than I did; but I was detained by unforeseen circumstances. Has any one else been here?"

"Ay, Einion ap Howel came to show me his beaming countenance once more."

"Did he tell you how matters stand at Gryffydd's court? Of course, he is still loyal to the core!"

Idris answered by repeating what Einion had said, while the hermit listened with due gravity.

"Thou wilt not again return to the king's hall," remarked the recluse when Idris paused. "Thy narrow

escape from the lion's den may be a warning to thee of a worse fate shouldst thou be found there again."

"I was thinking when you entered," rejoined Idris, "that Gryffydd and I shall meet again; but how and where I have not yet decided. You can aid me in this matter. Before I resume the task I have undertaken, however, I must go home for a few days."

Nothing could have pleased the hermit better than this determination on Idris' part to make a further attempt on the life of the king. Nor was he less willing to give him the aid of his counsel than of his surgical skill. While Idris continued to improve in health and strength, therefore, another plot was hatched to the satisfaction of both. And when the would-be regicide at length left the cavern, it was with the conviction that he would soon have an opportunity to execute his plot.

CHAPTER VIII.

Presages of Love and War.

Winter with its severe and long-continued cold, like Idrys' treason, was now only a memory, and April showers chased each other at intervals all day long, while the brisk south-westerly breezes occasionally drove before them the fleecy clouds, like so many sheep, as if to give men casual glimpses into the blue, ethereal sky from which the sun sent forth its bright rays with messages of renewed favor and life to the earth. The trees and flowers seemed determined to have an early spring, for even the horse-chestnuts were already adorned with their delicate sprays of five-fingured foliage, and the larches showed a wealth of verdure that surpassed in freshness that of every other tree; while the hedgerows teemed with celandines and crowfoots with a liberal sprinkling of primroses, and the copses were carpeted with hyacinths, daffodils, and wood-anemones. The tall, sturdy evergreens which in the long winter loneliness had looked down on the bare forms of their leafless companions were now put to shame by the verdant robes with which they clothed themselves. The swallows also, attracted from their winter quarters by the allurements of spring, were already busy catching the rapidly multiplying insects flitting around the honey-bearing blossoms. Then as the season advanced, the fields, literally covered with daisies, celandines, and other varieties of wild flowers, charmed many a delighted eye and heart; the fruit trees attired themselves in raiment of blossoms more

delicate in texture, more exquisite in color, and more rich in perfume than that of the most lovely of princesses; and a thousand feathered songsters filled with joy and gladness made the woods resound with their soul-stirring strains, while groups of merry children laughing, singing, and playing did their part towards heightening the effect of nature's grand panorama.

Nowhere was spring more lavish of her charms than in the Vale of Clwyd, and no part of this delightful vale was more beautiful than that in which stood Rhuddlan Castle. The Princess Nest certainly felt so as she strolled into the royal garden accompanied by Enid, her favorite maid, and lingered to admire the flower beds.

"What a supremely pleasant day it is," remarked the princess as they entered the garden. "This warm sunshine makes everything look as though it were clad in heaven's own beauty. And, Enid, see these charming flowers! How artistically Madoc has arranged them."

"I am glad that the fair daughter of the illustrious Gryffydd is pleased with the arrangement," said the head gardener who now unexpectedly appeared on the scene. "These varieties of crocus make a very attractive border as you see, the yellow, blue, white, and cream-colored properly distributed producing a most pleasing effect. They have sprung from a number of bulbs I received not long since from France, and are later varieties than those you saw earlier in the spring. These tulips which will ere long blossom into beauty are also new varieties. They were brought from the Orient by Morgan the chaplain on his return from a pilgrimage to the Holy Land."

"It was very kind of him to bring us something new, and I do hope they will blossom soon. I am very anxious to see how they look. In the meantime I shall continue to admire these old-fashioned flowers. There may be

more beautiful varieties than these snow-drops, jonquils, daffodils, and hyacinths, but I shall never lose my fondness for them."

While Nest was speaking Trahaiarn accompanied by his squire, entered the garden, and the princess, whose back was toward them, no sooner paused than her maid imparted the welcome intelligence to her in a whisper. Nest continued to talk with the gardener, however, as if she had not understood what her maid had said, until the prince and his squire joined them. Then she returned Trahaiarn's greeting with a degree of cordiality that encouraged him to ask her to take a stroll with him to a neighboring field, whose flowery carpet of yellow and white seemed so inviting. It was for this purpose that the prince had come to the garden, and as the princess consented to accompany him they were soon moving away in the direction indicated by Trahaiarn, while the squire and the maid followed them at a respectful distance. Nest was at her best; never had she appeared more beautiful or better pleased with herself and her surroundings. Nor was she slow to see that her tall, handsome companion was also in the best of spirits.

"During your sojourn in Normandy," said she as they paused a moment to admire the scenery, "did you see anything half so charming as our Vale of Clwyd?"

"Normandy can boast of much natural beauty," was the reply, "but I do not now remember to have seen anything to rival this. But why not ask me if your famous vale has a rival in Powysland? Can it be that you think fair Cambria has but one beautiful spot?"

"Cambria has but one Vale of Clwyd! Our bards have long pronounced it the glory of Wales."

"The awen (muse) sometimes soars too high on the wings of fancy, so high indeed as to lose sight of the truth. In this case, however, methinks there is just ground for

TILDEN FOUNDATIONS.

THE VALE OF CLWYD.



enthusiasm, and in this warm sunshine with this pleasing scene before me, I have nothing but admiration for what bards have praised."

As he spoke the prince picked a few daisies, and while the two resumed their walk he arranged them into a neat bouquet, which he presented to Nest with the remark,

"You have asked my opinion concerning this charming vale; now what think you of one of its many beauties?"

"It is a common charm of a most uncommon spot; yet it is a thing of beauty. I love it because nature loves it and has strewn it with lavish hand at our feet," said the princess.

"It is indeed a common flower, but though common it is a fit symbol of a rare virtue. There never was a truer picture of innocence. These 'gilt-cups' upon which we so carelessly tread might also be symbolical of some virtue; but the wisdom of the ages says that they bespeak ingratitude."

"Might not what you call the wisdom of the ages be the folly of some unsuccessful suitor who thought beauty ungrateful?" said the princess, stooping with a smile to pick a number of celandines.

"The 'gilt-cup' is not devoid of beauty, and is of the color of gold, and gold is often ungrateful," was the reply. "Hence might it not be that these yellow flowers were first regarded as symbols of ingratitude by some poor bard who had vainly courted the hand of wealth?"

"I can easily imagine what you say to be true, for even bards are mortal like ourselves. But, to change the subject, have you ever heard the legend respecting the origin of the daisy? If not, I will tell you, though I am afraid I shall do it poor justice."

"Yes, let me hear it, please. There is nothing that I

like better than an interesting story, except indeed it be—I was going to say the story-teller."

Had the prince glanced at the princess as he made this remark instead of looking straight before him, as if he had meant no compliment, he would have seen a blush on her cheeks. When he did look at her it was gone, and he heard her say,

"A Saxon minstrel who once strolled into my father's court, sang a song he had learned on the continent. He said the song was based on the following legend: The presiding deity of the orchards, whom the ancients called Vertumnus, saw Belides, one of the dryads, dancing, and falling desperately in love with her, pursued her, but to no purpose. Belides cared not for his love, and wishing to escape, she was at her own request turned into the little flower we call daisy, but which the Romans called Bellis."

"The legend is very beautiful; was the song equally so?" asked Trahaiarn, plucking a daisy that grew at his feet.

"It was, and I wish I had learned it," said Nest.

"So do I, for I have no doubt that it would sound sweeter from your lips than from the minstrel's. I am not indulging in flattery; you have a sweet voice and sing well."

"Look! yonder comes a cavalcade. I wonder what it means! Ah, it must be the Earl of Chester coming to seek my father's assistance to regain his possessions."

"You have rightly guessed, for yonder horsemen are Saxons if my eyes deceive me not."

This discovery caused the prince and princess to hasten back to the castle, and for a moment they forgot the pure enjoyment that they had felt in each other's company, and were lost in the general excitement attending the announcement of Algar's approach. Short-

ly after, the banished earl arrived with his retinue, and the king gave him a princely welcome. Once more the royal hall and larder were taxed to their utmost capacity; once more the son of Llewelyn was in his best mood. Next to the excitement of battle, Gryffydd loved nothing better than a crowded hall and an opportunity to share with friends or strangers his unbounded hospitality. The comparative quiet of the past few weeks had been a heavy tax upon his restless nature; hence he hailed the arrival of his father-in-law with genuine pleasure. He saw in it not only a means of diversion, but the prospect of war with the traditional enemies of Cambria.

After a short visit to his daughter Aldyth, Algar in accordance with the rules of the court was seated between the grand falconer and the prince royal near the king, while his attendants were distributed according to their rank, over the hall. Although in name only an earl, he was virtually a prince, and was a formidable rival of the wily Harold. Like his royal son-in-law, he was below the middle height, quick of temper, and of restless energy. He was well set, with rather sharp features; blue, vigilant eyes; and long yellow hair and mustache. His nervous movements and gesture bespoke a disposition little calculated to keep him out of difficulties. When he spoke his voice impressed his auditors as being rather sharp and hasty in its tones. Like most of his attendants he was clad in armor similar to that of the Normans, and his warlike appearance pleased Gryffydd very much.

Conversation between the king and Algar drifted by natural steps to matters directly connected with the English court. Next to the political ascendancy of Harold nothing galled Algar so much as the favor with which Norman adventurers and ways were looked upon among some of the nobility.

"I blame not the Confessor because his mother was a Norman princess, or because he spent most of his youth at the Norman court; but this worship of Norman coxcombs, this aping of foreign ways lie not easy on the Saxon mind and heart. I fear me that merry England shall never again see such golden days as she enjoyed when Alfred the Wise sat on her throne. Ah! a noble prince was he, and never failed to do the duties of his office. Bold as a lion, his enemies found him neither indolent nor asleep. In council he was the chief, and his voice fell not to the ground nor filled the prudent with disgust. To him England was a mother to be honored with the highest service, to be protected from wrong, to be exalted to the throne of power, and to be cherished in her ancient customs. But why let my thoughts thus wander to the departed glory of my country? It but makes my heart ache the more to see a weakling on its throne and foreign intriguers in its court."

Thus spoke the earl, and Gryffydd half amused at his numerous gestures, and somewhat touched at his unfeigned earnestness, remarked,

"England is no more to be pitied for this hankering after Norman fops and fashion than for her senseless endurance of the weak instrument of her folly. Thou art a Saxon; canst thou not devise some way to get rid of this foreign innovation that grates so distressingly on thy feelings? In Cambria such frivolous coxcombray would find such cold reception that it would soon freeze to death, or if it should spring up like a mushroom it would die as speedily.

"Would I could say the same of England," said Algar with a sigh; "but the disorder has struck its roots too deep into our courtly life, I fear, to be easily gotten rid of. We have suffered the pious inclinations of the

weak Edward to supplant our Saxon clergy with Norman ecclesiastics too long to enable us to find a speedy remedy. To a Norman he must make confession, a Norman must be his spiritual adviser, and to enrich Normans he must build monasteries and confer estates! By the bones of my Saxon forefathers, I shall not be surprised if soon the meanest coerl should refuse to be absolved by any but a Norman priest, or speak to his fellows in anything but the Norman jargon!"

A genuine Welsh feast being now spread before the Saxon guests the earl soon found himself too much occupied with meats and drinks to think of the subject which he had just been discussing. Indeed his mood, at length, underwent such a change that he freely exchanged jokes with Gryffydd, and joined in the general merriment.

CHAPTER IX.

Armed Against the Foe.

Algar had been in Rhuddlan Castle but a few hours when beacons were lighted upon every crag and eminence within a radius of many miles, and during the next two days armed men hastened to Rhuddlan from all directions. Gryffydd viewed the constantly increasing numbers with the greatest delight, and turning to his father-in-law he proudly said,

"Thou seest, noble Algar, how readily fair Cambria sends her sons to thine aid. But these constitute but a tithe of what thou shalt presently see. Ere many hours thine eyes shall behold the men of Gwentland, whose skill in archery the boastful Normans may well envy, and the men of the Deheubarth, whose spears are unequaled for the sharpness and temper of their steelheads. The lion is not more agile in springing upon his prey than these tried warriors in falling on an enemy. The raging torrent is not more irresistible than they are in the heat of battle. If thy Irish allies be made of like stuff we shall rend the heart of England as lightning rends the oak."

As the earl listened to these words he cast a sweeping glance over the brawny warriors who crowded the area in the vicinity of the castle, and scanned the Welsh chiefs around him as if to ascertain whether they really possessed fighting qualities. Trained to regard armor as one of the necessities of a warrior, he was inclined to look with disfavor if not with contempt upon the white

tunics and bare bosoms of the Welsh; yet in spite of this he was compelled to admit to himself that these brave and fierce-looking men would be formidable foes to meet in battle.

When, at length, the time to begin the march arrived, the head of the army, including Algar's allies, started in the direction of Chester. Gryffydd and Algar with their attendants, all mounted, in due time assumed a position in the line of march which would be central when all the troops were in their places.

"Methinks our enterprise promises well," said the earl, addressing the king. "Heaven frowns not upon us, the earth with-holds not her approval, and a strong army supports our cause. Thy valiant men, most excellent king, march with the eagerness of hope and the firmness of a noble resolve. By St. Dunstan, a hound takes not more naturally to the hunt than a Welshman to a quarrel with a Saxon."

"The hearts of the oppressed forget not the wrongs they have suffered, noble son of Leofric," said the king. "The past clings to us as the ivy does to yonder tower; nor can we shake it off, but it grows with each successive year. If I tell thee that the past has naught but causes for resentment and revenge for us, I shall tell thee nothing new. Thou art not ignorant of our history. Caesar found no England on this isle, and the last of the Romans who trod our shores heard naught of Mercia. But the first invaders of our land had scarcely reached their own ere other greedy eyes surveyed our fertile plains. To see was to covet, and to covet was to seek to gain possession of land. By the aid of traitors, thousands of Cambria's bravest sons were mown down as grass; others were subjected to a fate worse than death, while their possessions were

greedily taken, and by whom? The Saxons! With no pretext but greed for our territories and a desire to crush us unto death we have been forced inch by inch into our present limits through rivers of blood, and by whom? The Saxons! Our princes have been assassinated, our lords have languished in dungeons, and the common people have felt the hand of oppression heavy upon them. The authors of all these wrongs are the Saxons! They know our weakness, they are not slow to profit by our dissensions and divisions; but they have not found us an easy prey. Even a worm that is trodden upon dies not without resistance, and Cambria which has the heart of a lion and the arm of a giant, will not let her foes destroy her any more, or let her wrongs go unavenged. Hence I will be frank with thee, noble Algar; I render assistance to thee at this time the more willingly because by aiding thee I shall in part requite the evils we have suffered at the hands of thy people."

"Most gladly do I accept the aid of the illustrious son of Llewelyn," said Algar; "but is it right to visit the sins of the fathers upon the children?"

"Ay, when the children walk in the evil ways of their fathers," the king promptly replied.

"Then was it a greater sin for my Saxon ancestors to rob thy forefathers of their possessions than it was for the Celtic tribes to invade the land of a race whose remnant is still among us?"

"Ay, and for these reasons; the dark-skinned people whom my Celtic ancestors found on these islands were a low and feeble race, fit only to be the slaves of a better race. But thy Saxon ancestors found not an inferior people, else why after so many centuries are we still unconquered? Furthermore, Hengist and Horsa

gained not their territory by force of arms as much as by cunning and treachery. The beauty of the fair Rowena made a greater conquest than her father's sword; the long knives of the Saxon lords murdered more chiefs than the Saxon swords could slay in a thousand battles by fair means. And where is the Welshman who can remember that fiendish plot without a feeling of intense hatred for such a treacherous brood?"

An ominous glare in the king's eyes showed that he at least remembered the plot to which he referred with no pleasant feeling nor did Algar listen to his words with a calm spirit. The thought of the impossibility of his forcing Harold into terms favorable to his restoration without Gryffydd's aid, however, helped him to self-control. Therefore without showing any resentment he said with a forced smile,

"I fear me, most noble king, that thou wilt presently charge me with designs on thy kingdom in giving thee my daughter Aldyth; for according to thine own admission her charms are not to be despised, and there are those in England who think her more comely than the fair daughter of Hengist."

| "Thou mayest have had no designs upon my kingdom," said the king striving to throw off his ill-humor, "but thou certainly hadst an eye to a son in-law that could not only defend himself but could succor his father in-law in times of need. There be those who may not thank thee for it; but be assured Gryffydd ap Llewelyn is not among them. If thou be as well satisfied with thy son-in-law as I am with thy daughter, we shall not quarrel about thy designs."

The king here glanced over his shoulder in the direction of the castle as if to catch another glimpse of his wife and daughter, but as the castle was now left far be-

hind, he saw nothing but a marching column whose rear was lost in the distance. The numerical strength of his forces pleased him well, and looking forward again with a satisfied air he and the earl resumed their conversation.

The army marched at a rapid rate, and many were the exclamations of wonder and delight which the beautiful scenery through which they passed occasioned. The Saxons declared that even England contained nothing more enchanting, and the Irish allies admitted that barring the paradisaical beauty of "Ould Ireland," they had seen nought more deserving "A wink from the sun."

"Come now, Dermod," said Einion ap Howel, addressing an Irish lord at his side, "you will not have the impudence to claim that the Emerald Isle can boast of anything so fair as this."

"Impudence is it!" was the prompt reply. "Faith an' ye had the impudence to kick Cynan ap Iago from this vale clear into Cork, and king Awloedd comforted the poor exile with his prettiest daughter. Sure, now, ye can show nought fairer than that!"

"Hush! speak not so loud," said Einion with well-feigned apprehension, "if you wish to see Ireland again. There be those who have power to hurl you into Anwn (the shadow land), and Gwyn ap Nudd, the king of that region, has a pack of dogs most fond of hunting in these parts, and it may please his majesty to set his dogs on you instead of giving you his daughter."

"Faith, an' his dogs may find a tenderer hide than mine," said Dermod. "An' by St. Patrick, ye may tell his majesty that he shall not find me alone by meself; for—an' I tell it ye as a secret—me sword is as ready as me tongue."

Einion was greatly amused at the retorts of his fellow rider; for the Irish were no less ready with their wit then than now. Nor did he lose an opportunity to introduce subjects provocative of witty remarks. Nor indeed was this always necessary, for the Irish lord found material for fun even in the most solemn subjects.

In the meantime the army was rapidly approaching the English border, and late in the afternoon a halt was made not far from the walls of Chester, while a number of foraging parties were sent out in various directions beyond the border. These parties, however, in compliance with the earl's wishes, did no unnecessary damage; but simply exacted supplies for the support of the army over night. The same policy was maintained after the army started southward along the border, Algar wishing to retain the goodwill of the Mercians. When Herefordshire was reached, however, the soldiers instead of being placed under restraint were allowed to kill, burn, and plunder to their heart's content. Houses were plundered; fields wasted, orchards destroyed, live stock driven away, everything combustible burned, and such of the inhabitants as were overtaken were put to the sword. When at length the wholesale destruction ceased, and the army encamped in the vicinity of the city of Hereford, the king invited Algar into his tent, and the two after expressing their delight at what they deemed a good beginning, arranged that an attack be made on the city early on the next day. Each had his particular reason for continuing the work of destruction. Algar not only wished to gratify a personal grudge that he had against Rolf, the Earl of Hereford, but also thought that ravaging his earldom would have a tendency to force King Edward, who was Rolf's uncle, to restore him to his former dignity and position. Gryff-

ydd, on the other hand, considered the Norman earl the enemy of the Welsh because he was lord of the marches, and rejoiced in the opportunity to punish him as well as his subjects, whom he had plundered at lcast once before, for no reason other than the enmity existing between the Welsh and English.

In the course of the evening several of the southern chiefs arrived bringing with them a large accession to Gryffydd's army. With one of them came a knight clad from head to foot in costly armor, and attended by a number of mailed warriors. He was introduced to the king as an Armorican lord, who wished to be identified with the army during the campaign. He talked but little, and left the royal tent as soon as the king pronounced his services acceptable, refusing to make a longer stay on the plea of a much needed rest. Either unintentionally or by design his tent was pitched not far from that of Einion ap Howel, to whom he was presently formally introduced by the chieftain with whom he had arrived, and they seemed to take immediately to each other, for not long after both entered Einion's tent, and remained together for hours.

CHAPTER X.

An Arrow and its Work.

A short distance from the tent in which Einion and the knight held secret converse two of the king's guards stood talking together. Both were above the medium height, and were well-proportioned. They also had seen much service, being tried soldiers.

"I am convinced I shall never see Gwenllian and the children again," said one of them, "I shall be killed before another sunset."

"Tut, tut, man, you must not permit an illusion to cast a gloom over your mind," said the other. "You have passed unscathed through more than one fierce battle. Why should you think of death now when nothing more than a mere skirmish awaits us? It must be that you did not get your usual sleep last night, or perhaps the good things you found among the spoils weigh too heavily on your stomach."

"Believe me, Emrys, it is no illusion. Something tells me I shall not leave this field alive. Heaven knows that I do not prize my life so little that I am anxious to part with it, or my wife and children that I can think without a pang of leaving the world without seeing their dear faces once more."

The flow of words was here checked by the flow of emotion; but it was only for a moment. Then the guard continued,

"You will probably live to return to Rhuddlan; therefore I wish you would tell Gwenny that I never loved

her as I do now, and that I believe God will help her take care of the children. Tell her also that the locks of hair she gave me the other day are dearer to me now than all the gold in the world. I have but one more request to make. If you can find my body after I am dead take my sword and give it to little Arthur, and tell him to cherish it as a gift from his father, and when he comes of age, to use it in defense of old Cambria against all intruders."

"Your requests shall not be in vain," was the reply, "if I survive you. But why speak in this melancholy strain? The prospects of your life were never more flattering. To-morrow night we shall laugh over your presentiment."

Nothing can seem stranger to a man than to hear another, in the enjoyment of perfect health, and in view of no unusual danger, speak of death as hovering near him. The guard addressed as Emrys realized this as he listened to his comrade; yet living as they did in a superstitious age, when disbelief in ghosts and goblins were the exception rather than the rule, he believed more firmly that the presentiment would come true than his words seemed to indicate.

The midnight hour at length arrived, and Emrys and his friend with two others were assigned to their respective posts near the royal tent, that of Emrys being on the side next to Algar's tent, and his friend's being on the other, next to Trahaiarn's. As they were in the center of the camp, each, so far as any immediate danger was concerned, thought himself perfectly safe. Several watch-fires burned in various parts of the camp, but as the night was as misty as it was dark they could be seen at no great distance. One of these watch-fires was kept burning in front of the king's tent, but owing to the

shadows of the tent no less than the mist, Emrys and his friend paced almost in total darkness. They could hear each other's tread, but they were not near enough to see each other distinctly. Around them the soldiers lay peacefully dreaming, most of them on the bare ground with little or no covering. Inured to the hardships of army life they slept as soundly as if on feather beds. Nor was there anything to break the stillness of the night but the unpleasant sounds made by a few snorers here and there, and the slight noise made by the sentries as they paced to and fro.

Armed with a spear and a shield, each guard attended to his duty, wrapped in his own thoughts. Nor would it be difficult to say what the thoughts were in the case of one of them at least. Overshadowed with his presentiment his mind recurred again and again, now to the dread future, and now to the dear ones at home. He saw once more the dearest of wives as she was on the day when he made her his own, with a face so bewitching and hair of gold, the envy of maidens and the prize of his heart. He heard once more the sweet tones of the voice which knew so well how to comfort and cheer. Then sweet little faces so innocent, so true, seemed to gather around him again with smiles so charming and eyes so bright. Once more little Arthur seemed to mount on his knee, and say with a gentle caress, "Papa, I love 'oo." In the wake of these memories the tears would flow, and drawing his sleeve across his eyes he frequently brushed them away. He could weep in the dark without being told that he was weak. Meanwhile he paced mechanically to and fro, now at the side of the king's tent, and anon a little to the rear. He seemed to be oblivious to things around him, for a slight sound which brought Emrys for a moment to a

stand-still made no impression on him. For once in his life he was off his guard while on duty. His own impending doom made him forget that the king might be in danger. Emrys heard him for the hundredth time slowly and with measured tread approaching the farthest end of his prescribed course, as he tried to divine what the sound he had heard meant; then an arrow whizzed close by his ear while his comrade fell heavily to the ground. Instantly a thousand thoughts seemed to crowd into his mind, and a multitude of conflicting emotions seemed to rush into his heart; yet he managed to raise an alarm that roused the whole camp within hearing, and that immediately brought the reserve to the spot. Emrys stammered an explanation of what had happened as he led the captain of the guard with a few others to where his friend lay; then he was completely overcome by his feelings when he found that he had been pierced through the heart. Nor were the other guards unmoved by the sight, for the murdered soldier was a general favorite. Emrys alone, however, knew of his presentiment, and of the promise he had made to him a few hours before—a promise which he duly fulfilled.

Of course the murder of the guard was generally understood to have been a part of a plot to assassinate the king, and there were many conjectures as to who the traitors were. Most, however, were wide of the mark, while a few, among them Prince Trahaiarn, guessed more accurately; yet even they could produce no evidence that they had fixed on the right persons. Nor was anything done that night in the way of investigation, the matter being deferred till morning. It was thought advisable, however, to set twelve instead of four to guard the king's tent during the rest of the night, which was entirely unnecessary since one of the traitors was

already a considerable distance from the camp, and the other, who was none other than Einion ap Howel, meditated no further evil at present. It was he that had shot the arrow at Emrys, and it was Idrys, who had been introduced to Gryffydd and Algar as an Armorican lord, that had murdered the other guard. This was done after Idrys' followers had secretly left the camp to meet at an appointed place where Idrys rejoined them after the alarm was raised.

CHAPTER XI.

Woe to the Vanquished.

"What! here already Einion? Why, man, thou hast once at least stolen a march on old Sol. But thou hast ever been a good hound, and if I mistake not thou hast scented the ravening wolves that prowled around my tent last night."

"The noble son of Llewelyn has too generous an opinion of his unworthy vassal, especially in this instance, as the trail is so plain that a dog without either scent or sight could follow it. My lord, the king, remembers the Armorian lord who with his followers arrived last night?"

"The treacherous villain! why didst thou not bring him here, that I might spit upon him, and place my foot upon his neck, and fling his black soul to Annwn!"

"Can the fowler catch the bird that has escaped from the nest? No more can the Armorian lord be brought before the royal Gryffydd."

"Merciful heavens! and have ye permitted that traitor also to escape? By St. David, I will have you all hung as conspirators! But not before I learn when he left the camp."

"I only know, my lord king, that he has left; but there be those; who perchance, may know the time he and his followers fled the camp. Cadivor a Collwyn with whom he arrived methinks is not missing."

Acting upon this suggestion of the wily Einion, who evidently desired to turn both the king's wrath and

suspicion to another quarter, Gryffydd immediately sent an officer with an escort of four men to bring the innocent chief before him.

During the interval that followed the king was joined by Algar and Trahaiarn, together with a few other leading chiefs, and while they questioned Einion concerning the matter under consideration Cadivor ap Collwyn entered.

"Thou, I believe, canst claim the distinction of bringing that Armorican villain into camp last night," said the king sarcastically.

"I claim no such distinction, most noble king," replied the chief earnestly, "since he was only too anxious to come himself. He and his followers joined my band in Gwentland, and henceforward we proceeded together."

"Thou wilt next, no doubt, deny any knowledge of his character and wicked designs!"

"That I will, my lord king, and rightly too, for I never saw him nor heard of him before yesterday. Nor did I learn his history or intentions. That chieftain yonder may have been more fortunate, for the treacherous knight was seen entering his tent not long after he arrived."

"Ah! hearest thou that, Einion? Didst thou not tell us but a moment ago that thou hadst no conversation with him?"

"I did, my lord king, and I told you the truth. Whoever says the traitor entered my tent is a liar, and I can prove it," says Einion defiantly.

"He that calls me a liar dies," cried Cadivor ap Collwyn unsheathing his sword, and making a movement in the direction of Einion, who also made hostile demonstrations. Trahaiarn, however, stepped between them before they came to blows, and the king bade

them sheathe their weapons. Both were reluctant to obey, not wishing to stand in an unfavorable light before the king, and each felt inclined to withdraw his men from the field, but was restrained from doing so by fear that such action be construed into a proof of complicity with the traitors.

Seeing that nothing definite could be learned from either of the chiefs the king now dismissed them, hardly knowing which of them to believe or disbelieve. While the straightforward manner of Cadivor ap Collwyn impressed him as that of a truthful man, his own past relations with Einion had been of such agreeable nature that he did not find it easy to suspect him of treachery. Yet of one thing he was certain; the perfidious knight had one or more accomplices in the camp, against whom he decided to be on his guard.

The unexpected arrival of a scout, who hurriedly reported that the Earl of Hereford was approaching with a large force of horsemen, soon gave all something else to think about. Gryffydd and Algar had expected to take the city before any troops could be sent to its aid; therefore it was with no little surprise that they received this intelligence. Yet they were by no means disconcerted, as they and the chieftains hastened to arrange the army in order of battle. Algar assuming chief command of the Saxons and Irish, massed them, after the manner of his people, on the left; and Gryffydd acting as the Pendragon of the Welsh, disposed his forces in separate divisions, each under an independent chief, on the right. As the king's command over his forces was general rather than particular, each division usually fought independently of the others, which too often gave the enemy the advantage. The whole army was

on foot, with the exception of Algar and his chosen men, and a few armored chieftains among the Irish and Welsh; and the soldiers stood three deep, variously armed with javelins, darts, bows and arrows, swords, pikes, halberds, Welsh hooks and bills, and Danish axes. The only defensive weapon the most of them carried was a shield, while the rest had armor besides.

A hasty review of the allied forces satisfied Gryffydd and Algar both as to appearance and equipment, and each attended by his immediate followers assumed a central position in front of his own command, ready to receive the enemy. They saw by the gathering crowds on the walls of the city, which was a little beyond the reach of arrows, that the citizens greatly appreciated the fact that aid was at hand, and that they expected to be eye-witnesses of the conflict which was close at hand.

Nearer and nearer the earl and his army approached, their arms and armor glistening brightly in the morning sun, and the earth trembling under their heavy tread. Cheer after cheer from the city walls welcomed their approach, and presently coming in full view of the allied forces they wheeled into line amidst deafening shouts from the admiring spectators. But they had scarcely formed themselves in battle array before the terrible cry of battle drowned the cheering voices on the wall, and the combined forces of Gryffydd and Algar rushed forward with great fury towards the mounted enemy, while the latter terrified by the dreadful Welsh yell and the furious and desperate charge was thrown into the utmost confusion. Their steeds becoming unmanageable several of the knights were slain by colliding with each other; others fled in every direction closely pursued by the enemy, and some, despite their armor, were cut down immediately. Meanwhile Gryff-

ydd mounting one of the many riderless horses, spurred in among the foreign cavalry, dealing tremendous blows with a battle axe he had just picked up, such blows indeed as cut through helmets of steel and cleft heads down to the breast. At the same time Algar and Trahaiarn performed similar feats in other parts of the field, while the footmen failing to overtake the fleeing knights directed their attention to the city, sending shower after shower of arrows among those upon the walls before they had time to recover from their disappointment sufficiently to seek protection, and rushing in vast numbers towards the gate. Excitement now ran to the highest pitch; the citizens almost mad with fear, the assailants swayed by the demon of war. The gate was furiously attacked, and the heavy blows which so rapidly fell upon it could be distinctly heard above the din of arms and voices. As the strong frame-work of iron offered greater resistance than was expected, however, Gryffydd and Algar joined the assailants and restored a degree of order by their commanding presence, before an entrance could be effected. Nor did they fail to remind their respective followers that the wholesale destruction of life was not to be thought of, while they might take as many captives, and plunder as many houses as they pleased.

When the gate at length gave way, however, and the flood of war rushed into the city, many were seized with a thirst for blood, and many unfortunates fell victims to their cruelty. The streets soon became crowded with fierce, greedy, and merciless humanity, and every private and public building was broken into, plundered, and laid waste. Resistance was of no avail, protestation was useless, the cry for mercy was not always heeded, and respect for virtue was sadly lacking in many instances.

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HEREFORD CATHEDRAL.

Cruelty and violence was the order of the day; pity and moderation characterized only the actions of the more refined and humane.

Among the first to enter the city were Gryffydd and Algar with their immediate followers, who rushed forward with all speed toward the beautiful cathedral built by Bishop Athelstan, where Bishop Leofgar, with clerks, monks, and fugitives stood trembling with fear. The gates were closed and barred, and the doors were guarded by monks. The bishop contrary to the practice of the clerical order wore a coat of mail over his episcopal robe, and stood surrounded by his clerks and several persons of rank in the south transept with his hand grasping a sword instead of his crosier. He knew that the enemy would have no more respect for the sacred pile of which he was so proud than for the meanest hovel. Indeed he was convinced that the plunderers would be attracted by the treasures which the cathedral was known to contain as much as he had been by the dignity and estates connected therewith.

Presently a triumphant shout rent the air without, and echoed and re-echoed within the cathedral, and all looked with blanched faces and bated breath now in the direction of the noise, and now into each other's eyes. The monks who guarded the doors trembled so violently with fear that they could scarcely stand. The two that had charge of the door leading into the cloisters, however, had strength enough left to desert their post when the enemy began to attack it, and they increased the terror of those already in the transept by precipitately running in among them. But Bishop Leofgar who was not so terrified that he had forgotten either his dignity or his authority compelled them to return immediately to their post, charging them not to leave

it again, as they valued their soul's salvation. By this time the other gate had given way, and both the west door and the north porch were simultaneously attacked. Still the bishop offered not to move from the transept. But a second triumphant shout from the assailants, which told him that they had gained entrance into the cloisters, aroused him into action, and opening a secret door in the south-east corner by touching a spring in the wall he hurriedly said,

"Let half of you ascend that winding stairway; it will lead you to a chapel in the roof. Be quick as you value your lives; there is not a moment to lose!"

His command was immediately obeyed. Then shutting the door he led the rest through the south aisle into another transept, and thence into the lady chapel, where he paused to listen. What he heard was not reassuring, for the enemy now poured into the cathedral like a mighty torrent from the cloisters and through the porch, over the dead bodies of seven of the monks.

"O God! what shall we do?" cried a dozen voices.

"Holy father, we are undone," ejaculated the surviving monks bursting into the chapel.

"This way," exclaimed the bishop, hurrying to another part of the chapel, and touching a secret spring a solid block of marble in the floor flew open revealing a narrow stairway leading to a dark and intricate crypt. Every heart gave a bound of joy at the sight of this avenue of escape; nor was it necessary to urge any one to enter the crypt, for violent blows on the doors of the chapel indicated only too plainly that there was no time to spare.

"Curses upon the hypocritical dogs," cried a voice that could be heard distinctly above the rest, and the next moment Gryffydd, Trahaiarn, and several others

rushed through the broken door just as Leofgar caused the marble block to drop into its place. The assailants heard a noise, but saw not what caused it. "By my faith," said the king, unconsciously standing over the secret entrance to the crypt, "the devil surely must have taken his own at last, else where are the cowardly monks whom we chased hither but a moment ago, or the mailed hypocrite who vainly tries to wed the office of arms with the calling of a priest?"

"The devil has only spared us the trouble of sending his own to him," Trahaiarn laughingly replied. "And as a further token of his kindness he has left us all the spoils."

"Ha, ha, hearest thou that noble Algar? Where is the earl? By St. David! the wily Saxon applies himself as zealously to the task of robbing the church as his more pious father does to that of enriching her. Let us hence, else his greed will leave us no reward for our trouble."

His followers were only too willing to act on the king's suggestion, and they immediately joined the sacrilegious crowds that had already commenced to search for plunder. Every shrine was robbed of its relics, every wardrobe of its contents, and every emblem of its decorations. The saw and hammer had not been more active in the construction of the sacred edifice than the sword and axe were now in its defacement. When nothing more of value could be found the torch was applied to the combustible material, and in a very short time the smoke was so thick that it penetrated to the chapel in the roof, making those who had sought refuge there realize to the full a danger which they had with much agony anticipated. What had become of the bishop and the others they had left in the

transept none of them could tell, for even the few clerks that were among them knew nothing of the existence of the crypt. Nor did the question trouble them now that their own lives were in jeopardy. The thought that they had escaped death in one form only to meet it in a more terrible form made them almost distracted. The chapel was lighted by only two small windows, and they were so high up as to be out of reach. The smoke almost suffocated them, and the floor grew so hot that they expected every moment to see the flames burst through. Their agonies had reached their climax when hurried footsteps were heard in the stairway, followed by a violent fit of coughing. Then a voice commanded them to descend instantly, which they did with such promptness that they crowded the head of the stairway so full for a moment that descent was impossible. Fortunately for them, however, they succeeded in extricating themselves just in time to escape the flames that now burst into the chapel; and upon reaching the transept they were conducted at once to the crypt by a monk who at the peril of his own life had come to seek them in obedience to the bishop's command, the latter having no thought of fire when in the hour of excitement he ordered them to seek refuge in the chapel in the roof.

Meanwhile the whole city was being rapidly destroyed by the flames, all that was of value in it having been already carried away by the plunderers. And great was the rejoicing in the camp over the captives and the spoils. Gryffydd's greed was satisfied once more, and Algar's revenge, if not complete, was at least for the present appeased. Therefore as soon as practicable the allied forces commenced their march towards Rhuddlan, leaving Hereford a city of ashes and blood,

with her walls razed to the ground. The victorious army was everywhere received with acclamations of joy, for according to the ethics of the times to take the life of an enemy was not murder, to plunder the goods of hated individuals was not stealing, and to destroy their homes not a crime. Can we boast of much better ethics in the nineteenth century?

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CHAPTER XII.

Among the Ruins.

The joy and feasting which prevailed in Rhuddlan was more than equaled by bitterness and sorrow in Hereford. When the bishop entered the crypt there was no doubt in his mind as to the safety of the gold and silver vessels, and he comforted himself with the thought that he would have them in spite of the sacrilegious hordes that robbed the sanctuary of its sacred furniture and ornaments. As long as hostile footsteps and voices were heard above he and his companions in hiding remained perfectly quiet; but after the noise had ceased he ventured to the stone steps leading out of the crypt, and cautiously opened the secret door to find the Ladies Chapel full of smoke. It was then that he sent a monk to the relief of those mentioned in a previous chapter, and when they were safe within the crypt he closed the door, and once more descended the steps shaking his head and groaning in the agony of his grief. It was not until hours had passed that the door was again opened, and then only after some difficulty, as a small portion of the chapel wall had fallen on it. The relief thus afforded was more than offset by the depression caused by the desolation that everywhere met the eyes of the afflicted individuals that now emerged into the light of day. Their hearts sickened at the sight, and even the hardest of them could not restrain his tears. Those who were not directly connected with the cathedral were naturally drawn to

those parts of the city where their homes had been, but they found their sites only after much searching, all the landmarks with which they had been familiar having disappeared. As all the buildings, with one exception, were of wood, and most of them only one story, it had taken the fire but a short time to burn them even with the ground. In some places scarcely anything but ashes remained to indicate the spot where a house had been.

The cathedral had been built of stone and wood, and what remained still standing of its walls formed a most conspicuous object within the city limits. From the main building and the cloisters thick volumes of smoke still ascended, and the bishop surrounded by the surviving monks and clerks, stood sadly viewing the smoldering ruins, and lamenting the death of their ill-fated brethren, until night compelled them once more to enter the crypt, which now must serve them both as a sanctuary and dwelling place. Next morning the bishop found the fire nearly extinct in the vestries, and he immediately set two of the monks to clear away the rubbish from the floor of one of them, evidently with a definite purpose in view. Although the work progressed rapidly, he could scarcely wait until it was done. He could not understand the tremor of anxiety that had seized him. Of course, he thought the plate he had ordered to be secreted would be found. Why then should he lose his self-control? The plate would keep; it was not perishable material. It would remain where it was until removed, for it had neither feet nor wings. Yet he would like to see it once more. It would be such satisfaction to handle it piece by piece again. Especially would it be a delight to have another look at the gold chalice. Ah, yes the chalice! he valued that more than all his plate. It was the gift of his old master. Harold

the earl, Harold the generous, had caused it to be brought from Rome with the blessing of his holiness the pope, and had given it to him in recognition of his service. That chalice should remain with him until death should force them apart, and when it could be of no further use to him he would will it to—to whom? Ay, to whom? This question was not settled, for the floor being now laid bare in the east corner of the vestry, a new difficulty arose. The contrivance for opening the door of the vault in which the plate was supposed to be deposited had been rendered inoperative by the falling of the wall which contained the spring whereby it was manipulated, and it was only after much difficulty and delay that it could be forced open. The bishop no sooner saw this done than he descended into the vault, trembling with intense excitement; and the next moment he fell in a dead faint. His plate was not there, and the discovery was too much for his overstrained nerves to bear. Instantly grasping the situation two or three of his subordinates immediately went to his assistance, and carried him out into the open air, where he presently regained consciousness by the help of a restorative. The burden of his grief seemed to crush him, and for a long time he sat with his head buried in his hands, lamenting his loss, while his sympathetic helpers tried to console him. Whether they thought of it or not, their master evidently cared more for earthly treasures than for heavenly riches, and he was now reaping the fruit of his folly.

When the bishop had somewhat recovered from the shock he had received, one of the monks descried a large cavalcade approaching from the southwest, and at once called attention to it. At first the horsemen were too far away to enable the ecclesiastics to determine

their character; but presently it became evident that they were knights in shining armor. But who they were, and on what mission they were bent, could not be decided. The direction from which they came indicated that they were Welshmen, and some of the monks were in favor of seeking safety from possible harm in the crypt. The bishop, however, caring little what became of him now, insisted that they stay where they were, whether the knights were friends or foes. He had by this time risen to his feet, and surrounded by his subordinates he stood waiting the arrival of the cavalcade. The latter at length came to a halt in front of the ruins, and the leading horseman dismounted leaving his charger in his squire's care, while he proceeded to the spot where the bishop stood. After saluting the latter, he addressed him in Saxon, remarking with a slight accent,

"It is indeed a sad hour when the scenes of war invade the asylum of peace, and when the house of God shares the fate of the meanest hovel."

"Thou speakest truly," said Leofgar eyeing him closely, "but methinks thy tongue is not a stranger to the language of Gryffydd the destroyer. Hast thou come to complete the work which he would fain have finished?"

"I come to complete the work which I have begun, and that work concerns not the Bishop of Hereford, except it be to aid it," was the reply.

"And who is it that thus seeks my aid, and what aid does he seek of me who am myself in need of help?"

"If it please you, holy father, to give me a private audience, you shall learn both my aim and my mission."

The bishop commanded his subordinates to retire out of hearing, and while they moved away the knight took

off his helmet to wipe the sweat from his brow, thus revealing the features of Idrys. Personally he was unknown to the bishop, but Leofgar was not wholly unacquainted with the name which he now gave him.

"If rumor be true," said the bishop, "thou art as much Gryffydd's friend as I am. Is thy mission concerning him?"

"Ay, I am so much his friend that I shall leave no stone unturned until either he or I be dead. Twice have I striven to accomplish his death, and twice have I failed. My last attempt was but two nights ago, when the allied forces were encamped yonder, and had I succeeded Hereford would not now be a wasted city. I slew one of the king's guards, and had Einion ap Howel not missed the other, Rolf would not have had occasion to leave the field and run a race with the winds."

"Nor would I be now lamenting the loss of my plate! The saints forgive the perfidy of the monk who obeyed not my command respecting it; but I shall never forgive him. I had rather lose all other possessions than be robbed of my plate, and especially the golden chalice. Would that I knew where that wolf in sheep's clothing has hidden my treasure. It must be somewhere under these ruins."

"I fear my lord bishop is mistaken, and that the sacred vessels shall adorn queen Aldyth's room. At least they were seen yesterday among the spoils, and methinks that Aldyth, being Algar's daughter as well as Gryffydd's wife, shall have them to grace her sideboard, or rather thine, for thy sideboard was also taken."

"Then I swear by St. Dunstan that I shall have them again or die in the attempt to regain them. I will ask Harold, the earl, for a strong army, and overwhelm the

spoilers with the torrent of my wrath, thus avenging our wrongs as well as regain my treasure."

"Think you not that Harold himself will collect a great army, and advance against our common foe?"

"Would to God that he be so inclined! He is a general favorite, and the people would speedily assemble from all parts of the kingdom at his command. But I fear me that he is too much pressed with the affairs of state to exchange the scepter of power for the sword, for he it is that rules, though Edward reigns."

"Yet Edward may persuade him to enter upon this campaign, seeing that the earldom of his nephew has suffered so much from the inroads of the enemy. Me-thinks the Bishop of Hereford also might have influence both with the king and with Harold, since he was once a favored chaplain of the latter, and is highly respected by the former, being a priest of note."

Leofgar was greatly flattered by this last remark. Though a bishop now, he was always proud of the fact that he had in earlier years been Harold's confessor. It was a gratifying fact to him also that King Edward held the clergy as well as the church in general, in such high esteem. Idrys was not backward in turning his knowledge of these things to his own advantage. Thus he was able before the end of the interview to make him as anxious as himself to go and see Harold and the king, and they were about to commence the journey when they espied a large company of people coming from the southeast. A number of them were mounted, and the rest plodded along behind them, leading some half a dozen horses heavily burdened. This fact together with the motley character of the travelers plainly indicated that they were some of those who had fled from the city about the time Rolf was defeated, and

were now returning to make a new start in life.

While they were yet some distance from the ruins of the cathedral they halted, and after a hasty consultation, one of the horsemen came forward, evidently for the purpose of ascertaining the character of the mounted men they saw. The bishop beckoned him forward, and the next moment he was at his side, while the rest of the company assured that there was no danger ahead, resumed their journey.

"Ah, it is thou, Hubba," said Leofgar, addressing the horseman. "Thou hast been more fortunate than thy father's house, but not more fortunate than the rest of the family, I hope. Are they in yonder group?"

"Would that they were," was the sorrowful reply. "But such is not the will of heaven. My father was slain during our flight yesterday, and mother and the other children were taken captive, and are now with the enemy."

"Thou art greatly afflicted, my son," said the bishop in a sympathetic voice; "but not more so than hundreds of others. Thou must know that there are as many sorrowful hearts as there are wasted homes. Heaven help us to avenge our wrongs, and to forgive our cowardly defenders. Knowest thou where Rolf is?"

"On his way to London to see the king. They say he is going to ask him to send a large army to punish the invaders. I hope King Edward will have the grace to grant his request."

"And to give the leadership to a man that will not turn his back to the foe in the hour of battle," added the bishop.

The rest of the company arriving at this point the bishop exchanged a few words with some of the leading men. Then selecting four of his subordinates as a

sort of body-guard, he and they mounted five of the horses that had just arrived, and escorted by Idrys and his followers, they started on their way to London. They found that tidings of the desolation caused by the ravages of the allied forces had preceded them everywhere, and cries for vengeance rose from every hamlet and town, while London itself was full of excitement.

CHAPTER XIII. A Bloodless Victory.

In a room not far from the anteroom of the king's closet in the palace of Westminster, sat Harold the earl. His long hair, parted from the temples, fell in large waves half way to his shoulders, and his deep, steady eyes were fixed abstractedly on the wall. A look of displeasure rested on his usually calm, self-satisfied face, and his attitude was one of pride and determination. He had just been engaged in a private interview with the king, and was musing upon the subject which had been under discussion.

Presently a loud knock on the door startled him, and the next moment he welcomed Leofgar and Idrys with feigned composure and dignified pride.

"I rejoice to see thee in the flesh again, noble Harold," said the bishop as the three seated themselves. "Methought not many days ago I would never see thy face again. I am as a brand plucked from the burning. I was hard pressed by the enemy; my soul was grieved within me by reason of desolation."

Harold cast a searching glance at Idrys as if to satisfy himself that he was what he claimed to be. Then reading reassurance in the bishop's eyes he said,

"Rolf brought us the news of the terrible incursion yesterday."

"Such defenders as Rolf," said the bishop with a frown, "should have mill-stones tied about their necks, and be cast into the sea. They are nought but a snare

and a delusion. Hadst thou been there, my son, we might have laughed the enemy to scorn; but since thou wast not there to protect us, thou wilt no doubt avenge us."

"Something must be speedily done to punish the guilty," said the earl. "Gryffydd and Algar must be separated, if not by death, then in some other way. England is not safe while two such fierce and restless wolves as they prowl around her borders. An army must be sent immediately into Wales."

"An army without the noble Harold to lead it would be but chaff before the wind," said Idrys. "The Welsh fear no name in England as they do his name."

"Our friend speaks truly," said Leofgar. "Thy name is to them what thunder is to the lion, or what th hound is to the fox. And since thy name is a terror to them, how much more will thy presence be. Edward can spare thee long enough from the affairs of state to go and whip the Welsh into submission, and Algar into perdition. Idrys here is anxious to join thee with his hundred knights, and I will for the sake of dear old England exchange my episcopal robe for a suit of armor, and my crosier for a sword, until the will of heaven shall be accomplished."

Both flattered and amused at these remarks, Harold now expressed his intention of leading the army in person into Wales, and after exchanging a few more words, Leofgar and Idrys brought their visit to an end, leaving Harold to think over the situation.

Early on the following morning the earl placed himself at the head of all the troops available in and around London, and hurried forward in the direction of Gloucester, accompanied by the bishop and Idrys. The army received re-enforcements at several places along

the way, and upon its arrival at Gloucester, Harold, however, wishing to increase his forces still more, deemed it best to remain a few days in the town before advancing into the enemy's territory, and to send out scouting parties to ascertain where Gryffydd and Algar were. As Idrys was well acquainted with the Welsh border, he and his followers, at the earl's request, constituted one of the these parties, and in due time set out in the direction of South Wales.

The Welsh scouting party at length penetrated the heart of Gwentland, and kept their eyes and ears open for signs of the enemy's presence. Despite their vigilance, however, Trahaiarn with a number of tried warriors, managed to surprise them in a thicket not far from Pontypool. Idrys and his men were thrown into the utmost confusion for a moment, then they rallied, and a brief but severe engagement followed, in which several on both sides were slain or wounded. It was a hand-to-hand fight, and none were more active than the leaders, who at the outset sprang at each other like lions, dealing and parrying blows that fell like thunderbolts, and glaring at each other with fiendish hate.

"Take that, thou cursed worshiper of tyrants," said Idrys, aiming a fatal blow at the prince.

"And take thou that, thou base traitor," said Trahaiarn, receiving the blow on his shield, and returning it with such precision and effect that his antagonist fell seemingly lifeless from his horse. At the same moment a number of Idrys' followers, having routed some of Trahaiarn's men, surrounded the prince, and began to attack him from all sides. But he was equal to the situation, being in armor like his assailants, and an expert swordsman. During the brief struggle that ensued he slew one of his antagonists, and unhorsed two

others. Then finding that he could not continue the fight except at a great disadvantage, owing to the superior numbers and equipment of the enemy, he and his followers galloped away in the direction of Powys, pursued for a short distance by Idrys' men.

Upon their return to the scene of action, the mailed knights immediately applied themselves to the care of the wounded and the burial of the dead. Thinking that their leader was among the latter they were happily surprised to find not only that he was still alive, but also that his wound was not necessarily fatal. It so happened also that his estate was but a few miles away; and they bore him, together with the rest of the wounded, to his lordly hall.

When the excitement caused by the arrival of the wounded Idrys had somewhat subsided, and the officers in temporary command of the party had learned through the servants at the hall that Gryffydd and Algar with an immense army were in the southern part of Powys, he sent one of the knights disguised as a rustic to acquaint Harold with the strength and position of the enemy, and of Idrys' inability to return to him with his men. Nothing of a disagreeable nature happening on the way, the messenger safely arrived at Gloucester, but not in time to find Harold. For some reason, the earl had left the city sooner than he intended, and was now a day's march northwest of the city, pursuing his course towards Gwynedd. Determined to deliver the message, the messenger mounted a fresh horse and sped after the army.

In the meantime Harold pushed forward with considerable speed towards the enemy's territory. As yet he had found no clew to Gryffydd and Algar, but supposing them to be at Rhuddlan he intended to surprise

them there. Reaching the border of what is now known as Montgomeryshire, he allowed the army to rest a few hours. Then resuming the march he advanced in a northerly direction; but he had not proceeded far when the messenger overtook him, and learning from him that Gryffydd and Algar were in the South he decided after some deliberation to return to Hereford.

Though the soldiers were somewhat disappointed at the command to retreat without penetrating farther into the enemy's country, they had such implicit trust in the earl's good sense that they obeyed without a murmur. Perhaps Harold permitted them to devastate the Welsh frontier for the sake of humoring their whims no less than as a punishment to the enemy. At any rate, the line of retreat was marked for miles with signs of violence and hate.

Reaching the city of Hereford in due time, Harold at once set the army at work repairing the damages done by the invaders, and in the course of a few weeks the city was more strongly protected than it had ever been before. Gryffydd and Algar, however, though perfectly aware of Harold's movements, seemed to be in no hurry to leave Powys. This aggravated the earl, the more so because matters of state were daily becoming more urgent for his return to London. At last, greatly as he disliked it, he decided to enter into negotiations with the enemy with the view of settling the quarrel between them in a peaceful way. Hence two envoys were sent, escorted part way by a small body of picked men, into Powys with propositions from Harold. As one of the envoys bore aloft the holy rood as a signal of peace they were permitted to reach the enemy's camp without being molested. Nor did Gryffydd and Algar receive them ungraciously.

"What would King Edward's thegn with Gryffydd the king?" said the son of Llewelyn.

"His message, O king, is to earl Algar no less than to the royal Gryffydd," said one of the envoys.

"Ah! then deliver his message, for we are both here, and have ears to hear," said Algar.

The envoy who acted as spokesman now recounted the losses and sufferings caused by the late incursion into Hereford, and spoke at length of the just reasons which England had for punishing the offenders. This he did chiefly to give additional force to what he still had to say.

"But," said he in conclusion, "Harold is as generous as his king is forgiving. Instead of vengeance he will have mercy, and instead of coming into Wales with fire and sword he graciously offers terms of peace."

The envoy paused, and after a moment's silence Gryffydd fixed his piercing eyes upon him and said,

"We have heard the offer, but not the terms. Our patience is not yet exhausted; say on."

"Gryffydd the king and Algar the thegn must hear the terms of peace from the earl's own lips," was the reply.

Having thus delivered his message, the speaker, accompanied by the other envoy, withdrew into a neighboring tent to partake of refreshments, while Gryffydd and Algar discussed Harold's offer in the royal tent.

"By St. David, wonders never cease," said the king. "Who would have thought that the haughty Harold would sue for peace before aiming a single blow at his enemy?"

"The royal Gryffydd is mistaken," said Algar, laughing. "He sues not for peace, but offers us terms of peace because he is too generous to seek revenge!"

"Bah! the mask of generosity is too thin to hide the visage of fear," continued the king. "Could Harold but think that he is able to defeat us, dost thou imagine he would talk of peace? Thou mightest as well think that the waves of the sea would retreat at thy word. Fain would I welcome an opportunity to cope with him; but for thy sake I am glad that he desires peace, and I am in favor of the meeting which he has proposed."

"So am I; yet I know Harold too well to hope for any flattering terms. Therefore I think it wise not to place our expectations too high, or go too far from the army."

"Thou knowest there can be no peace unless thou art restored, or if he insist that I submit to Edward. As for the army, it must await our pleasure at the nearest point on the border."

After a little farther consultation, the envoys were summoned before the king, and instructed to tell Harold that Gryffydd and Algar would go forth on the morrow to meet him at the appointed place. Their mission being now fulfilled they immediately left the camp; and being joined by their escort in a forest a few miles to the east, they hastened to return to Hereford, where Harold was anxiously waiting for them. Knowing the warlike nature of the Welsh king, and the resentful character of Algar, he was not without some doubt as to how they would receive his proposition. The envoys, however, set his mind at rest on that point, and he set out in the direction of Billingsley, accompanied by Bishop Leofgar, and several of the leading chiefs, with a strong escort.

Arriving in front of a low clumsy building of timber, which was the best in the town, Harold and his chief men, including Leofgar, dismounted and entered a large hall, while the escort proceeded a short distance

further. The hall was evidently a part of a public building of some sort, and the floor was covered with rushes. Here and there close to the wall were crude benches, and in the center of the room stood a large, ill-made table, with its legs stuck into the mud floor. Just why this hall was chosen for the meeting is not known. Nor does it matter, since the meeting itself was of greater importance than the place.

Harold had been in the hall but a short time when Gryffydd and Algar, with Trahaiarn, and a number of other chieftains entered, and after a rather formal exchange of civilities seated themselves on the opposite side of the room from the others, according to their rank. A pause followed during which furtive glances were shot across the hall from either side. To Harold's men the Welsh king was as much an object of curiosity as he was of hate; and to Gryffydd's men the English earl was as much an object of study as of dislike. All except Gryffydd and two or three others were in armor; yet the son of Llewelyn looked none the less a king on this account. Nor did he lose anything by the contrast between his stature and Harold's. Despite his small and slight form, his bold mien and fiery eye, together with the corselet of gold that covered the center of his breast, and the gold collar that encircled his throat pronounced him a chief among men. As he sat facing Edward's most powerful earl, who also had the appearance and manner of a man born to rule, there was an air of defiance in his kingly bearing, which he cared not to suppress. This did not escape Harold's vigilant eye more than the cold and unpacific demeanor of Algar, and it was with some degree of restraint that he presently arose and said,

"We are here not by accident, but for a purpose.

The object of this meeting is not unknown. Is it the desire of Gryffydd the king, and Algar the son of Leofric, to have peace established between themselves and the king of England?"

"Ay, if the terms offered be satisfactory," was the reply.

"What terms can ye who have forced yourselves by ravage and rapine, sacrilege and murder into England, expect to receive? Is not the majesty of England justified by the blood which ye have shed, and the homes ye have destroyed in offering only such terms as the case demands?"

"Wast thou justified in depriving me of my rightful possessions, and driving me into exile?" Algar indignantly demanded.

"What thou hast suffered is much less than thy desert, seeing that thou hast allied thyself to the destroyer of thy people," said Leofgar.

"Peace! peace!" cried Harold with some irritation. "We come not here to quarrel. Our good Algar remembers his punishment without remembering its cause. But it is not for him to decide how long his punishment is to last. The majesty of England is ready to offer him free pardon, and to restore him to his former dignity and possessions, provided he takes the oath of allegiance."

"That, I doubt not, he is ready to do," said Gryffydd, glancing at Algar; "but what has the son of Godwin to say to Gryffydd the king?"

Harold hesitated a moment as if to collect his thoughts, then said,

"Thou knowest too well, O king, what mischief thou hast done to England. Know also that she can offer thee no terms which do not include some sort of satis-

faction and a promise of submission to King Edward."

This answer threw the Welsh king into a terrible fit of passion, and for a moment it seemed as if bloodshed was inevitable. But Harold prevented a fight by withdrawing his demand both for satisfaction for the mischief done, and for submission to King Edward. After the removal of these objectionable features the two agreed upon some sort of treaty greatly to the disgust of Bishop Leofgar, who thought it far less honorable to England than favorable to Gryffydd. When the treaty was concluded, and Algar had taken the oath of allegiance, Harold returned to Hereford, and from thence to London, and Gryffydd and Algar retraced their steps to the Welsh border, where they separated, Algar taking the Irish allies to Caerleon to be paid, and Gryffydd going to Rhuddlan, where he dismissed his forces.

CHAPTER XIV. On the River Clwyd.

Now that the hounds of war were once more at rest, the state of things in and around Rhuddlan Castle contained little to recall the warlike aspect which the presence of the allied forces had given to the place of late. Gryffydd, when not busy with the affairs of state, found much pleasure in recounting recent events, and in listening to the poetical effusions of Idwal, the family bard. The younger members of the royal household, finding nature more charming than the castle, often yielded to her allurements. To Trahaiarn and Nest the Vale of Clwyd had never seemed so beautiful, and the river, as it meandered through the meadows and mirrored the various forms of mid-summer beauty along its banks, had unusual attractions for them. Finding these attractions no less irresistible than the promptings of their own hearts they found themselves one pleasant evening sitting together in a coracle on the placid waters of the Clwyd. Their small craft was rudely constructed, and contrary to the ordinary custom it had been made large enough for two persons instead of one. It was oval in shape, being seven feet long, and four feet wide. A small keel ran from the head to the stern, a few ribs were placed across the keel, and the whole was covered with the rough hide of an ox. Their seat was in the middle, and consisted of a rough board covered with goat skin.

"Shall we go up or down?" asked the prince when the two were seated in the boat.

"I care not which way," replied the princess, "provided you do not upset the coracle, for you must remember that I can neither swim nor fly."

"We shall go towards the sea then, since drifting with the current is more agreeable to youth than rowing against the stream," said Trahaiarn, as he pushed the coracle from the shore with his paddle. Then he added, "If I upset the boat you may blame the romancers, for do they not consider it the height of virtue for the hero to rescue the heroine from death?"

"Then if you have any such intention," laughingly remarked the princess, dropping her paddle into the water, "I must beg you to let me out immediately."

"What, so soon? The water is not deep enough here, and we are too near the castle. Besides, it will be more romantic to upset the coracle when you are not expecting it."

"How provoking you are! you know what I mean. And unless you promise to banish all thoughts of the romancers from your mind, I shall make my royal father banish you from his court for harboring a murderous design!"

"That were a worse calamity than the upsetting of the boat, unless he banished you with me."

While they spoke in this jesting manner the coracle glided slowly down the river, and the birds poured their sweet evening songs into their ears from the trees which lined the river banks, and through which the rays of the setting sun struggled as if to catch a glimpse of the beautiful daughter of Gryffydd. The air was pervaded with the odor of clover blossoms and the hum of myriads of insects floated on the soft summer breeze. Everything conspired to make the evening most favorable to the growth of love. Never had the princess ap-

peared so lovely to Trahaiarn. Her smiles bewitched him, and her voice thrilled him. There was no doubt in his mind that he loved her. He was even sure that he could love no woman but her. But how was he to make known his love without being too abrupt? Perhaps a story would serve as an introduction. He would try it. But before he had time to speak, the princess, wholly ignorant of his thoughts, said,

"Think you not the fairies love to dance on such an eve as this?"

"Ay, and perhaps a fairy tale will bring them into view," was the reply "The story about the shepherd lad and the fairy maiden you doubtless have heard."

"I think not, unless it be the same as that about the young farmer and the lake maiden."

"It is not the same, but is similar to it."

"Please tell it then."

"A farmer in the Deheubarth had a son whose manly bearing and handsome face made him the envy of all the youths of his acquaintance. This son cared for his father's sheep, and loved the solitude of the fields better than the society of his companions. No maiden fair had touched his heart, though many sought to win him with their charms. Born not to wed one of the race of men, he one day beheld a most lovely fairy damsel behind some rising ground as he was crossing a marshy meadow in quest of his father's sheep. Her hair was of the hue of gold, her eyes as blue as yonder sky, and her cheeks as red as the rose. To see was to love her, and the youth following an irresistible impulse approached her, and meekly begged permission to converse. 'Idol of my hopes,' said she with a most winning smile, 'you have come at last.'"

"Ah! then she expected him!" exclaimed the prin-

cess breaking in upon the narrative. "Think you that men and women are foreordained for each other?"

Here was an opportunity for Trahaearn to declare his love; but his courage failed him, and with some embarrassment he continued,

"I know not; but it seems that the shepherd and the fairy were ordained for one another, for they loved each other from that hour, and met each day and wandered happily together over the meadows amidst the smiles of the daisies and the singing of the lark. Sometimes the youth was absent for days together, and his friends knowing not where he was, whispered to each other that he was bewitched. He kept his secret from all but the lovely fairy. From her he could not hide his love; nor did she turn a deaf ear to his suit. One day while standing in a grove near the lake in which she dwelt, she promised to be his. He now lacked only the consent of her father to make his happiness complete, and this he received in due time. It was on a moonlight night. Impelled by love he came to the grove long before the appointed time, and with only the pale moon for a companion he scanned the calm surface of the silvery lake and peered into its depths to see if he could catch a glimpse of his ladylove. But he looked in vain until the moon disappeared. Then he was rewarded by the appearance of the fairy maiden and her father. They greeted him kindly, and the father consented that the daughter should be his, provided he would never strike her with iron. The youth joyfully agreed to the condition, and soon there was the sound of marriage bells. The bride brought much money with her to her new home, and she and her husband were blessed with prosperity, happiness, and several handsome children."

"And so the story ends. In the fairy tale of which I

spoke but a moment ago the farmer lost his wife by violating the conditions."

"So did the shepherd, and by a mere accident. He and his fairy spouse were one day out riding, when her horse sank deep in the mire, and as her husband helped her to dismount, the stirrup struck her on the knee. It was no fault of his that she was struck, nor did the stirrup hurt her. But the fairies are a jealous and fastidious race. Scarcely had the accident occurred ere voices were heard singing on the summit of a hill near by, and the fairy wife immediately vanished from the arms of her husband, leaving all her children behind. Henceforth she was not allowed to walk the earth with man; but her woman's wit aided by her mother love came to her aid. A large turf was floating on the lake, and from that hour till her death she frequently stood for hours upon the turf conversing with her dear ones. Thus ends my tale."

"And it ends well," said Nest. "Please tell another."

"It is your turn now, not mine," replied the prince, casting a side-glance at his lovely companion, and thinking that he was no nearer making a confession of his love than before.

"I know no tale but such as you are already familiar with," said the princess, meeting his glance with a look that thrilled his whole being.

"Old tales would be new from your lips," remarked Trahaiarn, scarcely knowing what he said. "But perchance, you prefer singing one of your favorite songs."

"Of what shall I sing? Of war?"

"No, it is now a time of peace."

"Of feasting and rejoicing?"

"Ay, if it be at a wedding."

"Of love?"

"Ay, without the sting of disappointment."

"Ah, then you have been disappointed in love!"

"Not I. Nor do I wish to be, for have I not seen some of the fairest flowers of knighthood blighted by that withering blast? The heart loves not to have its dreams dispelled on the eve of realization. But this is not listening to your song."

He was soon listening, however, for she immediately consented to sing in a most captivating voice the following song;

LOVE'S FASCINATION.

In days of yore,

His feasting o'er,

Love went forth from shore to shore

With charms the world to fill,

The earth in desolation lay,

Nor moon by night nor sun by day,

Saw beauteous flowers or plumage gay,

In forest, dale or hill.

Love with wondrous grace,

While pure delight shone on his face,

The world completely changed apace,

And made all nature glad.

Sweet flowers came forth where'er he trod,

And birds where'er he swayed his rod,

With hearts so light, sang praise to God,

Nought in his train was sad.

In Paradise,

With wondering eyes,

Beings fair in childish guise

Each other viewed apart.

Naught knew they of the power of love,

'Till love itself came from above,

Their hearts with passion's fire to prove,

Then vowed they ne'er to part.

Ever since that time,
In human hearts a spark sublime,
Waits Fancy's breath in every clime
To fan into a flame.
Oh, happy he who wins a bride,
And she who doth not misconfide;
Theirs not a life in desert wide,
But comfort, joy and fame.

The princess paused, and plied her paddle vigorously a few times, causing the coracle to head up rather than down the stream. This sudden action roused the prince as if from a dream. He had been so enwrapped in the song that for a moment he was oblivious to everything else. Realizing what Nest had done he said,

“Ay, you wish to return, but under the spell of your voice I could glide down the river forever. You have sung me into paradise; do not thrust me into a place of torment. Nest, I love you, there I have said it. I wanted to say it before, but I could not. We have been much together of late, and you have grown dearer to me every day. Without you I have no chance of happiness. Can you, will you be mine, O sweet daughter of Gryffydd?”

How he trembled! how eagerly he waited for her reply—a reply that did not come. Agitated like himself she hid her face in her hands to hide the tears that would not be kept back. She was so happy! He loved her, and he had told her so!

Uncertain as to the meaning of Nest's behavior he again broke forth in the vehemence of his passion.

“Will you not say that you love me? Will you not say that you are mine?”

The princess was again silent, but removing her hands from her face she smiled on him through her tears. This was enough. The next moment Trahaiarn folded her to his heart and kissed her. Each felt the other's love. Neither needed to be informed what the lover's paradise is. Oblivious to all sights and sounds they enjoyed the hush of blended hearts and of the happiness which no words can express or describe. Unheeded by them the coracle again swung around, and headed towards the sea, and in the gathering shadows they drifted on the river of supreme delight, forgetful of the past, indifferent to the future.

They would have been glad to prolong love's Edenic spell indefinitely, but as the current bore the coracle under the willows overhanging the margin of the river, the slender branches that rudely slapped them in their faces soon brought them to a realization of the presence in the world of something besides themselves. Accordingly they headed their frail craft towards the castle, and as they applied their paddles they talked of love and earthly bliss.

CHAPTER XV. Mischief Again Brewing.

We now turn our attention to Idrys once more to find him slowly recovering from the effects of his encounter with Trahaiarn. Disappointed at his inability to join Harold in his campaign against Gryffydd and Algar he was in no amiable mood when the news that the earl had made terms with the enemy reached him, and the news itself was not calculated to improve his temper.

Autumn found him fully recovered, and though he greatly desired to find means to further molest Gryffydd, he was not given a favorable opportunity until the following summer. He knew from one or two consultations he had had with Leofgar that the bishop was as dissatisfied as he with the treaty Harold had made with the Welsh king. He knew also from a visit to the hermit's cave that Gryffydd anticipated no further trouble soon. But with his few followers he could not hope to spring a surprise upon him. The dissatisfaction which made him so restless, however, also made the bishop of Hereford secretly active. By means of a prolonged visit to London and the co-operation of his friends in his diocese and the surrounding country, he succeeded by the middle of summer in bringing together a large army. And a few days before he was to cross the border into Wales he sent word to Idrys to join him at Hereford with as many men as he could summon together. Here Idrys found his opportunity, and on the

day appointed for the start Leofgar found him on hand with a force several hundred strong.

In due time the invading army was in motion, taking a course substantially the same as that pursued by Harold's army the preceeding summer. The bishop having donned a suit of armor felt as much at home at the head of the forces as if he were conducting a band of pilgrims to Rome.

The farther into Wales the army penetrated the more unbearable the heat became, and by the time the base of the Berwyn Hills was reached the soldiers, especially those in armor, were so completely overcome by it that Leofgar was obliged to bring his forces to a sudden halt.

This vexed the bishop not a little, as he was anxious to push forward if possible as far as Rhuddlan before meeting any opposition. Nor was the news brought him by a courier sent by Einion ap Howel calculated to improve his temper.

"Einion ap Howel sends greeting to the bishop of Hereford," said the courier, addressing Leofgar, "and regrets to inform him that the advance of the English army is known at Rhuddlan Castle yet by no lack of vigilance on his part. The beacons on the hill-tops betrayed the secret which tongues would fain have told. That which bespoke the presence of danger also summoned together the king's defenders. Gryffydd already counts his men by thousands, and will soon come against you from the north, while Trahaiarn who has hastened to the south will lead the men of Powys and of Deheubarth against you from that direction, and if possible cut off your retreat."

"*Sancta Maria!* hearest thou that, man?" ejaculated the bishop, casting a hasty glance in the direction of

Idrys. "Insufferable heat, the army exhausted, the enemy coming against us from the north, and seeking to cut off our retreat in the south! Surely we are in a fearful strait, and I know not what to do."

"Hear what the courier might have further to say, holy father, and prepare for battle," said Idrys.

"My message to the bishop of Hereford is ended; for Einion ap Howel presumes not to add advice to the information which may quicken the invention of superior wisdom" said the courier with more meaning to his words than at first appeared. Then he immediately left Leofgar's presence followed a short distance by Idrys.

"Hast thou a word from thy master to me?" asked the latter.

"He thinks the lion unwise to ally himself with the hound," was the significant reply.

"May not the hound help the lion to his prey?"

"More likely to his death! A suit of armor cannot change even a bishop into a tried warrior. If Gryffydd found Harold unwilling to meet him in battle need he fear Leofgar? Einion would not advise the bishop; but his friend Idrys he counsels to seek revenge in some other way."

"Tell Einion that Leofgar's defeat shall be my triumph and Gryffydd's fall; and that I may need his help in the heat of battle. Farewell."

On his return to the bishop's tent Idrys found Leofgar in consultation with Eloth, the sheriff of Hereford; and a number of other chiefs. They all greatly disliked to give up the campaign; yet under the circumstances it was decided, contrary to Idrys' wishes, to retreat at once to avoid the trap that Gryffydd had set for them. The bishop was still perspiring quite

freely, and while issuing orders for the march he frequently passed his forefinger over his forehead to prevent the perspiration from streaming into his eyes. He soon managed, however, to set the army in motion once more, this time in the direction of Shrewsbury to avoid coming in contact with the southern division of Gryffydd's army. A more experienced general would have seen that an army in the condition his was in could not out-march men who not only felt but little fatigue, but who were inspired with the hope of victory, and that his action in forcing his men forward was suicidal, as it left them no strength to cope with the enemy.

Meanwhile Gryffydd hastened on from the west and Trahaiarn from the southwest, each eager to overtake the retreating army. Advancing a few miles farther the king espied the English army on the western slope of the Wrekin. Leofgar had hastily massed his troops, the archers occupying the front, the men-at-arms on foot in the rear, and bowmen intermingled with men-at-arms on the wings. As the Welsh forces came in sight each of the English archers fixed a stake, sharpened at both ends, in the ground in front of him, with the point inclined toward the enemy, thus forming a movable palisade. Shortly after the terrible Welsh yell announced to the king that the prince was at hand and the king's troops greatly delighted immediately responded though the newcomers were as yet unseen by them, being hidden by a strip of wood that lay between them.

Although by this time ready for the attack Cryffydd thought best to wait till Trahaiarn was ready for battle before giving the order to charge. Standing in front of his men, with the red lion of North Wales on the left, and the traditional red dragon on the right of him, he

watched the men of Deheubarth and Powys pouring to the front, each chieftain arraying his command according to his own notion, but the prince, as the king's lieutenant, having oversight of the whole. As the Welsh forces were as yet beyond arrowshot from the English the latter could do nothing but bide their time to act. Nor did they have to wait long, for no sooner were the prince's men in battle array than the whole Welsh army rushed forward like a mighty torrent, at the king's command, rending the air with a shout that struck terror to the hearts of the English, who, sending a flight of arrows among their assailants, responded with fainter shouts of "Out! Out! Holy Cross!" As the enemy came nearer, the bishop's men hurled their javelins at them, but in vain. Up the hill the fierce Welshmen charged, spearmen in front and archers and others bringing up the rear. Before this terrible rush the right wing of the English army broke and fled, and the left wing after a brief and ineffectual resistance fell into the greatest confusion. The center, which was composed of Leofgar's best troops and Idrys' followers, held out heroically, until the Welsh, following up their advantage, made a determined assault on the weakened flanks as well as the front. The English then gave way, finding it impossible to maintain their ground, and a terrible slaughter ensued.

In the midst of the fray Gryffydd, clad in his scant attire, did terrible execution with his sword. Charmed as it were against arrow and spear, he made a path for himself and followers through walls of steel, and with flaming eye and distended nostrils he presently found himself face to face with Leofgar and a number of his priests.

"Base priest!" said he, "thine hour has come. Thou

hast prayed enough for others now pray for thyself."

"It is thou murderous caitiff, that needs prayers," was the angry reply, "for I have consigned thy soul to unquenchable fire, and thy body to the ravens."

"Amen," cried the priests making a rush upon the king, some with swords and others with spears. But the king's courage and skill, aided by his guard, were equal to the occasion. Striking down the foremost ecclesiastics he left the others to the fury of his followers while he confined his attention to the bishop. The latter aimed several ineffectual blows at him with a huge Danish axe, while he with the agility of a cat made several attempts to pierce through Leofgar's armor. But he succeeded in doing so only after his antagonist's axe had grazed his left shoulder. Then glancing deprecatingly at his blood-stained shoulder he leaped over the expiring bishop to the aid of Trahaiarn, who with a body of veterans was opposing Idrys and his mailed Knights. At sight of the king Idrys redoubled his strokes, and in forcing his way toward the chief object of hatred he wounded Trahaiarn severely under the arm. Then as the prince fell he ground his teeth with rage and opposed himself to the king, who finding a long-looked-for opportunity to avenge the attempts made upon his life fell upon his malignant foe with all the fury of undying hate. For a moment all in the vicinity of the two leading combatants left off fighting and became interested spectators of a most fierce duel. But Idrys' followers realizing that their leader's strength was fast giving out put an end to the truce by attempting to come to his aid. The king's guard, however, gave them enough to do to defend themselves, while the king himself after receiving one or two slight wounds thrust his sword into Idrys' side

causing him to reel and fall like a drunken man. Then amidst the shouts of his men Gryffydd with a triumphant laugh trampled on his fallen foe.

The battle was now soon brought to an end, and the victors applied themselves to the care of the wounded.

CHAPTER XVI.

Baffled.

King Gryffydd, beaming with the smiles of triumph, sat in his tent in the midst of a number of his chiefs, while the royal drinks went round. His left hand rested on his knee, and his right hand held his bejeweled drinking horn, which he raised to his lips only after replying to a facetious remark made by one of the chiefs.

"Methinks it was an Irish lord," said he, "who when dying, was pressed by a priest to forgive his enemies, that he might receive absolution, replied, "Holy father, I have none to forgive; they are all dead."

"My royal father evidently purposes to emulate the Irish lord," said Prince Meredith, amid an outburst of laughter.

"A dead enemy is as harmless as a loyal friend, though not so helpful," the king laughingly replied. "I doubt not that Trahaiarn, did his wound permit him to be here, would express the same opinion. It is no little satisfaction to know that the base hound that has thirsted for my blood, will dog my steps no more. Heaven and earth what have we here?"

All eyes were now fixed on the entrance, where Cadivor ap Collwyn had just arrived with prisoners well guarded. Conscious of the importance of his capture, and half amused at the king's bewildered look, the chief hastened to say:

"The royal Gryffydd has not forgotten the quarrel I had with Einion ap Howel or its cause. My lord king will pardon me if I say that I was somewhat put out by his refusal to believe in the guilt of a man, of whose complicity in the crime of that treacherous knight who tried to force his way into the king's presence over the dead bodies of his guards I had not the least doubt. To-day, aye, within half an hour, I have had a renewed proof of his guilt. As I was returning with these my brave men, from pursuing the enemy, I suddenly came upon this caitiff nursing back to life the traitor who has more than once sought to rid Wales of her best defender and friend. And now I have brought both traitors before the king to await his pleasure."

Not a trace of the triumph that had so recently marked the king's manner and look was now to be seen. The thunder clouds of wrath rested on his face instead, and the lightning of revenge flashed in his glowering eyes. For a moment there was an ominous silence, during which Einion stood with his look bent on the ground, while the wounded Idrys lay on a stretcher with his tigerlike eyes fixed on Gryffydd's face.

"Heaven forgive me for not doing surer work on that prowling villain, and for refusing so long to believe in thy guilt, thou base dissembler," at last cried the irate king. "The curses of bleeding Cambria be on you both, and may the hounds of hell give your treacherous souls no rest. I will be guilty of no more bungling. The sun that now sinks in the west your eyes shall see no more, for before it appears again in the east I will make an example of you both to the terror of all traitors."

"Does the generous Gryffydd condemn a man to

death without giving him an opportunity to vindicate himself?" said Einion, now looking the king full in the face.

"And dost thou, vile hypocrite, dare to insinuate that thou hast aught to vindicate?" was the cutting reply. "Do we need any proof but darkness to show that it is night? Vindication indeed! Let the devil prove that he is a saint!"

"I can prove that I am guilty of no treachery in this matter," persisted Einion. "If this wounded man be Idrys I swear that I knew it not until this preying buzzard pounced upon us. Methought I was befriending one of Prince Trahaiarn's men since their armor is so much alike. And here I am condemned to die a traitor's death as though I were guilty of high treason. The royal Gryffydd were more like himself were he more mindful of my loyalty in the past, and less prone to jump to evil conclusions."

"Thou surely didst look like a guiltless person when we came upon thee," sneeringly remarked Cadivor.

Up to this time Idrys' face had been hidden from the view of those around the king by the obtruding presence of some of Cadivor's men. But now they were allowed a full view of him, and several of them exclaimed, "By my faith, there lies Caradoc ap Gryffydd, lord of Portascyth!"

"He is the son of Gryffydd ap Rhydderch?" inquired the king, pointing to Idrys.

"Ay," said that individual, glowering at the king, "I am Caradoc, the son of that noble father whose rivalry to the throne of Deheubarth thy craven heart could not brook, and whose blood was shed by thy murderous hand. If I have failed to avenge his death and am

myself to fall a prey to thy inordinate thirst for blood it is that heaven's sword may fall upon thy head with double force. I crave of thee no boon; to invoke the curses of ten thousand generations is more fitting. What thou art bent upon doing do quickly, for death is to be preferred to thy hateful and unholy presence”

“Thou shalt have thy desert soon enough, by heaven,” cried the king, “far too soon for thy good. Nor shall I be more guilty of thy blood than of thy father's. I met thy father fairly on the field of battle, and his fate was only what he wished mine to be. Thou, base craven that thou art, durst not meet me like thy father in open combat, but hast for these two years played the traitor. Therefore thou and thy chief accomplice shall have a traitor's death. Where is the captain of my guard? Caswallon, remove these pests from hence, and as thou valuest thine own life see that they be not missing at early dawn, for then they must pay the penalty for their crimes.”

The command was no sooner given than Einion ap Howel and Caradoc ap Gryffydd, or Idrys, as he has hitherto been known, were hastened away from the king's presence and placed under strict surveillance in separate tents. Before the two were separated, however, Einion snatched an opportunity to suggest to Caradoc in a whisper that it might be conducive to his interest to feign a degree of weakness that threatened to cheat the gallows.

About two hours after they left the king's tent an individual in the garb of a monk, repeating the pious sayings so much affected by the monastic orders of the period, proceeded from the quarters of the captain of the king's guard towards the tent in which Einion under the close vigilance of the watch without in total

darkness lay. After a momentary detention by the guard he approached the condemned man, and in a low deliberate monotone began to offer him the consolations of religion. At the same time the two, unseen by the men without, hastily exchanged clothes, and a few words that passed with the guards for Latin. Then presently Einion, completely disguised, left certain instructions with his confederate, and muttering to himself passed out unrecognized by the guard. He seemed in no hurry; but advancing at a moderate pace, he soon found himself near Caradoc's tent.

"Who comes there?" demanded a stern voice.

"A poor brother of the Order of St. Benedict, who comes hither to offer the consolation of religion to one Caradoc ap Gryffydd, who is condemned to die," was the reply.

"If he is not already beyond help, holy father, he soon will be. In either case I would advise you to seek a more deserving and promising subject."

"His sins no doubt are great, and greatly do I deplore his guilt, but ego sum nuntius of mercy, and as such should not allow the vilest soul to go to perdition without an opportunity to repent. *Hic breve vivitur,* and may the Blessed Virgin grant me strength to do my duty."

"You doubtless speak the truth but if the Blessed Virgin have no better success in understanding your Latin jargon than I your success will be but indifferent."

"Thou art not expected to understand what only priests should know. But thou canst now step aside and let me see if indeed the condemned be past help or not."

"Our orders are strict, holy father, and must be kept inviolate. None, whether king or priest, may enter

this tent without a written permit from the captain of the guard."

As Einion produced the necessary piece of parchment he was no longer detained.

Caradoc had played his part so well that the guards more than half suspected that he had already died of his wound; but in reality he was in a much better condition than he was when brought before the king. He still maintained absolute silence when Einion entered, and pretended to revive a little only after the pseudo monk had given him some wine out of a flask he chanced to have. Nor was Einion slow to turn this by-play to his own and Caradoc's advantage, for while the guards received the impression that he was working hard to revive the condemned man, he was in reality assisting him to put on the gown and cowl in which he had entered. Then he proceeded to prepare Caradoc for the doom which was supposed to await him, summoning to his aid all the Latin phrases at his command. This he did at first in a tone of voice meant for the ears of the guards, but gradually his utterance became so indistinct to all but the supposed invalid that a petty officer threateningly remarked:

"If you speak not louder, holy father, we shall deem you an accomplice and not the confessor of the traitor."

Einion promised to be brief, and after a few more whispered words and an occasional groan and feeble response from Caradoc the pseudo monk brought the interesting farce to a close by remarking aloud:

"If thou follow my counsel and forget wherein thy only salvation lies, it shall be well with thee. Vale."

The next moment Caradoc, clad in the garb of a monk left the tent unrecognized. Perfectly unconscious of this the guards continued pacing to and fro,

occasionally glancing toward the east to catch the first glimpse of dawn, and hoping that their charge would live long enough to grace the gallows. Presently a strange apparition rose as from the ground, and seemed to paralyze them with fear. In the darkness nothing was visible but big glaring eyes and mouth, aglow with the most mysterious fire. Completely unnerved by the uncanny sight the superstitious guards forgot all about their charge. It was comparatively easy for Einion, therefore, to glide out of the tent, and rush out of their grasp before they could realize what had happened. And this is just what he did. Nor did the guards sufficiently recover their wits to grasp the situation before he had placed several rods between himself and them. The apparition being a short distance north of the tent greatly favored the wily chieftain's flight to the south, the exact direction in which Caradoc had gone. His progress was somewhat impeded, however, by the nature of the ground, and by the darkness which screened his fleeing form from the eyes of the now alert and chagrined guards, who, raising a general alarm, as they went, blindly followed in hot pursuit. Here and there, also, he ran against a man, who, roused by the sudden outcry, rushed across his path completely bewildered, and once or twice he escaped capture only by leaving pieces of his tunic in the hands of those who tried to seize him as he hurried past. By winding in and out among the tents, and making free use of a short sword he carried, he finally eluded all his pursuers, and sought the hiding place to which he had directed Caradoc.

No pen can describe the utter confusion which now prevailed throughout the camp. As the whole army, with the exception of those on duty and a few others,

was fast asleep when the alarm was given, and therefore knew not the real cause of it, the wildest rumors were immediately set afloat. But the king, after partial order had been restored soon learned the real cause of the alarm and confusion by summoning the guards into whose custody the two traitors had been given, to appear before him.

There were twelve of them in all, and as they obeyed the summons they trembled with fear, well knowing the mood in which the irate king would receive them. They brought with them the individual whom Einion had left in the tent out of which he went to Caradoc's assistance, and who had not been successful in his attempt to escape.

For a time the king, incensed by the state into which the camp had been thrown, and already suspecting the cause for the general alarm, paced like an enraged lion in front of his tent, unable to control himself sufficiently to question the guards. Nor was what they now tremblingly narrated to him of a soothing nature. The real character of the deception which had been practiced on them they discerned only after discovering that the man in their custody was not Einion; but it now enabled them to show the wrathful Gryffydd that they were less culpable than at first appeared. The king's disappointment was too great at the traitor's escape to allow the occasion to pass without wreaking his vengeance on some one. Therefore, while yet in the heat of passion and while the narrative of the guards was yet unfinished he seized a javelin and hurled it through Einion's confederate, who proved to be a faithful member of Einion's command. It was a wonder also that he did not fall upon the guards; but after one or two more outbursts of wrath he surprised

even those that knew him best by commanding that they be simply placed in custody to await his further pleasure, and seeing signs of approaching daylight he also gave orders that the army put itself in readiness to march.

He knew the nature of the country and of the fugitives too well to entertain any hope of overtaking them, else he would be only too glad to send a number of troops in pursuit of them, or even to convert the whole army into a searching party. The two were already secure among the hills, and fearing no immediate pursuit they sat down under a tree on an eminence about a mile from the camp and in full view of it.

"How fares your wound now?" asked Einion.

"I fear my flight will not be good for it," was Caradoc's reply, "though it be but little deeper than the skin."

"I hope Meiric has succeeded as well as we, for without his timely aid neither of us would have been able to escape, unless one of the chiefs, who managed that apparition so well would have volunteered to act as father confessor to me."

"Ha, ha, that apparition was a grand idea. It is strange what marvels a few pieces of rotten wood arranged on a shield can perform."

"Ay, and superstition is worth something after all, if it be only that one might appeal to it in time of danger.

"It was a fortunate circumstance for you that it frightened them out of their wits. But what will you do now that your estate will be confiscated?"

"I will live where I have already spent a large share of my life. Let me have that monkish garb."

It took but a moment for Einion to don the gown

and cowl and to remove a false mustache, thus completely transforming his looks, and Caradoc viewing him in the grey morning light suddenly exclaimed,

"By St. David it is my friend, the hermit!"

"Ay, and I shall be as safe in my cave in the future as I have been in the past," was the reply.

CHAPTER XVII. A Visit to Powysland.

After a brief stay in the neighborhood of Rhuddlan, during which Gryffydd made a promise of allegiance to King Edward of England, the army was again disbanded, leaving the king and his court to enjoy a short interval of rest. Time, also, which is a good healer of wounds as well as of sorrows, at length enabled Trahaiarn to leave his room, but as the restoration of his strength did not keep pace with the healing of his wound, the surgeon suggested that a trip to Powysland would be advisable as soon as he was strong enough to take it. As a preparation for the journey the prince began to take frequent rides in the vicinity of the castle, accompanied sometimes by his squire, and sometimes by the princess. Nest was less pleased with the surgeon's advice than was Trahaiarn. Not that he relished the separation that it involved more than she did, but after an absence of two years or more he naturally wished to combine the pleasure of a visit to his parents with a change of climate. Not much was said on the subject, however, until the prince informed her one day as they rode together in the direction of Conway that he had decided to start for Powysland on the morrow.

"Must you start so soon?" said she. "Nay, must you go at all? Of course, I wish you to get well, and the sooner the better; but must you go so far to secure

a change of air? I do not thank the surgeon for putting that idea into your head for who is to go out riding with me when you are gone?"

"I was not aware that I am the only available young man in your father's court," said Trahaiarn with a smile.

"Nor am I the only young woman in Rhuddlan," retorted Nest, "but I am myself, and being myself I have the privilege of my own preferences."

"I shall miss your company as much as you will mine, so much so that I have half a mind to ask your father to let you be one of the party."

"You have not asked me yet whether I want to go or not. You men take too many things for granted."

"I thought that since you were anxious to have me stay you would be equally pleased to accompany me since I have decided to go."

"Indeed! who would be so foolish as to want to follow a lover that must always have his own way?"

"Or stay with a sweetheart who is equally persistent in making her will supreme. But let us be serious now. I feel I must go to-morrow, although I regret the necessity, for heaven knows how much I shall miss you."

Continuing the conversation they at length returned to the castle. Upon entering her room the princess found Enid in a sadder mood than she remembered ever to have seen her, and though divining the cause of this change she asked with affected cheerfulness,

"Has there been a storm, or are we to expect one soon that the sky has lost its brightness?"

"No, the sun is about to depart," was the prompt reply. "Heard you not that the prince leaves for Powys to-morrow? They say it is a settled matter."

"Where the prince goes the squire must needs follow," said the princess, assuming a lightness of manner that she did not feel. "Hence as the thought of Trahaiarn's departure drives the sunshine from thy face, some one should weep for poor Cadwallader. Pray fetch me an onion, and let it be strong enough to open the flood-gates of my tears."

"If it please you, they say when the sky lights up suddenly it is but a sign of a speedy shower."

Enid was quick to see that Nest felt less cheerful than she appeared; indeed when night came more than one silent tear dropped on Nest's pillow. To her the journey to the farther end of Powys seemed almost like going out of the world, and traveling was attended with so much risk that she imagined all sorts of calamities as likely to befall her lover. Nor was her maid less concerned about Cadwallader. Yet both tried to be light-hearted, as the prince and his escort of a score of men left the castle gate early the next morning. Trahaiarn and his squire also appeared more cheerful than their feelings warranted, and the occasional glances that they cast over their shoulders testified that their hearts were reluctant to part from the loved ones left behind.

The prince and his escort were fortunate to make the journey when the roads, which were usually very bad, were at their best. Their course for the most part lay through a thinly settled country, where not a little of the primeval wildness was yet untamed by the hand of man. Now they followed the banks of a river, anon they traversed a hill or mountain. Here they looked upon fields of golden grain ripe for the sickle; there they rode between tall trees or passed by a monastery or through a village. The latter in all cases was

a collection of rude dwellings built in the immediate vicinity of the scarcely more pretentious palace of a lord or chief, who held his estate subject to the king, and sublet it to free men and serfs. Of the modern towns which lie along the same route to-day there was little or no signs.

Galloping forward the riders at length reached the valley of the Severn, and in the course of a few hours more the prince found himself in his childhood home. Like the houses of most of the princes and lords it was a clumsy dwelling with walls of woven branches, plastered on the inside, and with a thatched roof supported in the center of the hall by a row of long posts. The inside was as ungainly as the outside, there being scarcely any artistic display and but little furniture. What few ornaments there were decorated the room where the happy mother now received her valiant son, whose unexpected arrival brought a glow of pleasure into her kind, beautiful face, despite his somewhat pale and fatigued appearance.

Dinner being soon ready, Trahaiarn and his men partook of a bountiful repast, and the prince's mother noted with satisfaction that his appetite bid fair to rival that of any of his men. Nor was her delight diminished when he told her in confidence soon after of his relations to Nest.

During his first week at home he made frequent excursions to neighboring estates. Then he went as far as Cibwyr, where Bleddyn ap Cynvyn then resided and found his uncle playing a game resembling the modern chess with his brother Rhiwallon. Suspending the game the players rose to greet the prince, and expressed their pleasure at seeing him fully recovered after his late encounter with Caradoc ap Gryffydd. This

gave Trahaiarn an opportunity to turn the conversation into a channel which would serve his chief purpose in making the visit.

"I hear that the traitor has honored you with a visit recently," said the prince, addressing Bleddyn.

Bleddyn glanced somewhat embarrassed at his brother, and feeling that he must say something, replied,

'Ay, the cunning knave has been trying to buy one of my slaves. He thinks Dicus ap Engan Goch would make a most admirable hostler, and was as anxious to press me into a sale as—as thou art to wed Gryffydd's daughter, if reports are true.'

"Methinks his visit has a deeper intent," was the reply. "He is not in need of a hostler so much as a horse to speed him to his purpose. Think you it seemly for the descendants of Rhodri Mawr to associate with a man who has to my personal knowledge thrice attempted your brother's death?"

"Gryffydd's enemies are not of necessity ours," said Rhiwallon; "nor are we bound to make his quarrel ours, seeing that he cares no more for us than for the aliens who hover about his possessions. If he thought it contrary to his dignity to treat us as brothers, he might at least have rewarded our services as allies, for I doubt if Gwynedd would ever have been his without our assistance."

"Then Caradoc's mission was rather to make you a slave of his ambition than to buy one of your slaves," sarcastically remarked Trahaiarn.

"Rhiwallon said not that," Bleddyn hastened to reply; "nor shouldst thou draw conclusions that are unjust from his words. What he says about Gryffydd is true, and I might add that his late successes have spoiled him more than his enemies. He had better not carry his head too high, for 'pride goeth before a fall,' as the old saying is."

Rhiwallon and I, however, shall never lift a hand to hasten his downfall."

"There are others who would readily do that, as there are other ways to injure a man than by lifting the hand," insinuated the prince.

"Ha, ha, thou art a suspicious dog," said Bleddyn. "How soon young dogs learn the tricks of old ones. But let us talk on more agreeable subjects. A piece of good beef and a cup of steaming mead, for instance, for here comes Ivan to announce that dinner is ready."

Trahaiarn and his men willingly shared in the hospitality of Cibwyr Hall, as they were very hungry after their morning ride; yet the prince was a little more reserved than was his wont to be on such occasions, owing to an increasing conviction that Caradoc's murderous plots would be aided rather than checked by his uncles. Nor did he hide this conviction from his mother on his return home in the evening.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Trahaiarn Falls Into a Trap.

After spending a few more weeks in his ancestral home Trahaiarn, now in the full enjoyment of health and strength, decided to return to Rhuddlan Castle. The morning he and his men started on their journey was all that heart could wish. The sun smiled upon them from a cloudless sky, the breath of autumn fanned their bronzed faces, and where the virgin forests did not attract them with their charms, visions of ripened fruits and harvest fields in which the reapers were at work presented themselves to their view. Occasionally the song of fair maidens as they followed the sickles, binding the golden grain, delighted their ears; and sometimes the rich voice of some lusty swain as he engaged in some light work amused them. Nor was there a lack of musical attempts among themselves, when the country through which they passed possessed no engaging attractions.

Thus while they pursued their journey northward the morning gradually wore away, and noon found them dismounting before the hall of one of the king's most loyal chieftains. Outwardly the hall was no more attractive than many others; but the true hospitality of its owner made it peculiarly attractive to the prince and his escort. The chief had known Trahaiarn from childhood, and the two were no sooner seated together in the hall than they were plunged into reminiscences of former days.

ly north through Llanfair and along the Vyrnwy to a point a little south of Oswestry, where it struck the main road. As the prince was anxious to press forward, no stops were made, except what were necessary for refreshments; hence he and his escort hurried by Oswestry early in the afternoon, and came in sight of Eliseg Pillar, a little before nightfall. This pillar was then intact, and according to an ancient custom, stood on a tumulus surrounded with green trees. The shaft, which, with the exception of the capital, was round, was fixed in a square pedestal, and measured twelve feet. Like all other pillars of the period to which it belonged, it was a memorial of the dead, and was surrounded with an inscription. As the cavalcade approached it Trahaiarn's attention was attracted by an ancient bard who was standing before the pillar seemingly trying to read the inscription, and presently he exclaimed:

"So you, also, venerable bard, are anxious to wrest from the ancient column its long borne secret. I hope you have succeeded better than most people who have made the attempt."

"I fear, Sir Knight, that my success is but indifferent since my father neglected my Latin," replied the bard, casting a quick glance in the direction of the voice. "I was just wishing that some one better acquainted with the language of our first invaders might come to my assistance, and perchance I am fortunate enough to find such a one in you."

"If you mean that I am able to read that inscription," said Trahaiarn, "I must surely disappoint you, for in the matter of Latin my education is as defective as yours. But if you so desire I can tell you the substance of what scholars say the inscription contains."

"I shall not depreciate your kindness, seeing that next

to reading the inscription itself nothing would be more acceptable than a narrative of its contents."

"There is but little to tell. As you see, the pillar is old, but not so old as to be classed with the rude columns of Druidical times. It was erected in memory of Eliseg, the father of Brochmail Ysgithrog by Congen, his grandson. It is a wonder that hostility or fanaticism has not long ago demolished it, with many others of our national relics. But I must cut my words short, as darkness will soon be upon us."

"Thank you. I also must hasten on my journey, for if I am rightly informed, I have yet a few miles to travel before reaching Llandegla, where I shall spend the night at the hall of Ievan Vychan."

"Good! You shall have plenty of company, for I and my escort shall also tax the young warrior's hospitality to-night. Cadwallader, can't thou walk a part of the way that our friend the bard may ride? We must please his humor, for we shall expect to have a proof of his bardic skill before we sleep."

"Trouble not yourself, friend, on my behalf," the bard hastened to say. "My feet are not unaccustomed to walking, nor have I traveled so far to-day that my strength is not equal to the few remaining miles before me."

As Cadwallader was not opposed to taking a little exercise on foot after a day in the saddle, and as Trahaiarn further insisted that the bard ride the rest of the way, the latter presently did as he was requested, and the cavalcade proceeded at a moderate pace for the accommodation of the prince's squire, who brought up the rear.

"I infer, from what you have said," remarked Trahaiarn, addressing the bard at his side, "that this is your first visit to Llandegla. Am I right?"

"Ay, and I doubt whether I would seek the place even at this time had not Ievan Vychan sent me a pressing invitation to come to a feast which he is about to hold," was the reply.

The cavalcade at length reached the loneliest part of the rough and narrow road which led to Llandegla, and as it was now quite dark the prince and his escort peered in vain into the woods on either side. Nothing was farther from their mind, perhaps, than the fear of an attack by outlaws, as no one had been molested in that vicinity from time immemorial. If any of them especially disliked the dark shadows of the woods it was more from a fear of goblins than from a suspicion of danger. The prince, like the others, being off his guard and intent upon carrying on his part of the conversation was ill prepared for the misfortune which now befell him. The first intimation of danger which he received was the falling of his horse pierced by an unseen spear; then the realization of being seized by a number of violent hands, while his men were being attacked on every side by a force that was at least double their own number. A small proportion of his men found themselves being trampled to death before they hardly knew what had happened; others, and among them the prince's squire, offered such resistance as was possible under the circumstances. The chief concern of all of them was the prince, and such of them as were in a position to do so made repeated attempts to reach the spot where they thought he was, only to be repeatedly forced back by their fierce but unseen foes. Yet on the whole they fared better than their assailants, as they all wore armor, while the latter did not. When the fighting seemed to be deadliest, the cries fiercest, and the lightning-flashes of oft-repeated blows most terrible, a blast from a trum-

pet, which reverberated through the woods, suddenly left the prince's escort without a single antagonist. Cadwallader and one or two others attempting to follow the retiring foes knocked themselves senseless by running against trees, while a few stood confounded amidst the dead and wounded. Then presently these few, desiring to know what had become of Trahaiarn, slowly picked their way forward, and came upon a solitary figure clad in armor lying under a dead horse. Was this their chief? Was he dead or alive? These questions they vainly asked as they tried to remove the prostrate form from under the crushing weight that was upon it. Nor were they any better informed as to the identity of the unfortunate knight when he was taken out from under the horse, for it was impossible to see his face, as the darkness was still intense. Whoever he was, however, they were no longer in doubt as to his being dead, and the question of identification was settled when the moon arose.

CHAPTER XIX.

Sad News Reaches the Castle.

It was more than an hour before Cadwallader recovered consciousness, and the first thought that entered his mind concerned the prince. He remembered that he had learned nothing as to how he had fared during the attack, and now that the rays of the full moon were struggling through the trees, he hastened to the scene of the late engagement, suffering not a little from a large contusion on the forehead. The surviving members of the escort received him as one from the dead, and in answer to his eager inquiries informed him that they could find no trace of either the prince or the bard. Two of their comrades were dead, also four of the horses, including Trahaiarn's favorite palfrey. The other horses were nowhere to be seen. Their assailants had lost five of their number in the attack. After learning these facts the squire agreed with the rest that the best they could do would be to proceed to the village with their dead comrades, and after their burial hasten to Rhuddlan Castle with the news of what had befallen them. As Llandegla was scarcely a mile away the journey thither occupied but little time. Before reaching the village the travelers were fortunate enough to find nearly all the missing palfreys, and upon these together with a few borrowed horses they proceeded northward early the next morning, leaving the remains of the dead knights in the village grave-yard. As they had expected they

RHUDDLAN CASTLE.



found no trace of the bard at Ievan Vychan's house, and they were surprised when told that the young chief knew northing of his coming. Not unnaturally then the more they thought of the matter the more inclined they were to regard the bard as an accomplice of their assailants. As yet, however, they were wholly uncertain as to the real character of their late antagonists, and hence as to the fate of Trahaiarn. If the attack had been made by some petty chieftain who had a grudge against the prince they considered the latter's chances very dubious; but if it had been made by outlaws they thought he would soon regain his liberty by paying a ransom. For the sake of the princess they decided to advance the latter theory, and wait for further developments.

It was past noon when they reached the castle, and the news they brought created much excitement. The king swore that he would have the whole country scoured by his forces, and every outlaw put to death. But in his cooler moments he thought it better policy to abandon the whole scheme, hoping that his favorite servant would appear in due time. Nest received the news with tears of disappointment and apprehension. She had counted so much on her lover's return. When at last a cloud of dust announced the approach of a cavalcade from the south she was sure that he was coming. How her heart beat with anticipation! It seemed a century from the time the dust first appeared till the horsemen approached near enough to be recognized, and the princess almost fainted when she perceived that Trahaiarn was not among them. Where could he be? Why was not his squire with him? Why should her maid be more blessed than she?

Anxious as Enid was to have a private interview with

her lover the princess took Trahaern's misfortune so much to heart that the maid found no opportunity to leave her mistress till late the next day. Her efforts at consolation did her much credit, and her mistress some good.

"Did he say the assailants were outlaws?" asked the princess for the third time, wiping the tears from her eyes.

"That is what I understood him to say, the maid patiently replied, "and your royal father, you remember, said that he would put all the outlaws in the country to the sword."

"That is easier said than done, Enid. The robbers have so many hiding places, and they have so many confederates that they do very much as they please. Would that I knew where they have taken him, that I might go and plead for his liberty. I would give all that I have for his ransom."

"If you but exercise patience you shall doubtless hear from them soon. But I fear their exactions will exceed both the prince's and your ability to pay. But the prince's credit is good, which is one consolation."

"If the ransom which others have been made to pay is a sign of what we are to expect, they will not be sparing in their demands of the prince. But a man will give anything for his liberty—perhaps I ought to say for his life, for I cannot rid myself of a suspicion that the attack which deprived my betrothed of liberty had another cause than the obtaining of a ransom."

Here the princess again burst into tears, and her sobs for a time bade fair to baffle Enid's attempts to pacify her.

"The prince has no enemies, for is he not the most popular chief in Gwynedd?" said the maid, sitting be-

side her mistress and supporting her head on her shoulder. "Why then should his captors have any design on his life?"

"I am not so sure that he has no enemies," said Nest between her sobs, "for is not my father among the best of men? yet he has his enemies."

"What! still making yourself miserable, daughter, over what oceans of tears cannot improve?" exclaimed the queen coming into the room. "It ill becomes a princess to be blubbering and weeping, sobbing and wailing like a country wench who is jilted by a lout. What if your lover has fallen among thieves? May he not again regain his liberty? Some that I know full well have greater reason to weep, for their hearts sigh for lovers that are worse than dead, while fate compels them to suppress their tears and smile upon those they love not."

"A princess is but flesh and blood, and I have no more reason to be ashamed of my tears than I am of my love," retorted Nest, her resentment for the moment getting the better of her tears. "Did I not weep for Trahaiarn I should consider myself unworthy of his love."

"The thunder shower is soon over, daughter, and a swelling torrent soon passes away. When you are older you will learn self-restraint, and nurse your griefs in silence. In the meantime calm yourself and be reasonable if not for my sake then for your father's."

As usual the queen's tactless and unsympathizing manner irritated Nest almost beyond endurance. Her intentions, no doubt, were good. To inflict pain was as far from her purpose as her words fell short of expressing her goodwill. Yet as years rolled on her manner evinced no better knowledge of the sensitive nature of the princess, else her attempts at consolation would not always

assume the form of censure. There were times when the queen wondered whether she herself were to blame for the undesirable effects her words had on the princess; as a rule, however, she attributed Nest's resentment to a gross lack of patience and amiability on her part, and she left the princess' room on this occasion more convinced than ever that she was the most wilful girl she had ever seen or heard of.

"Canst thou tell me, Enid," said the princess when Aldyth was gone, "why mother's words never soothe me? Is she incapable of sympathy? Why does she always speak to me as though I had no feelings, and as though my troubles were mere fancies? Why can she not speak to me as thou dost? Thy words are to me like ointment to a wound. To thee I am not a monster incapable of pleasure and pain, but one of like passions and feelings with thyself. Thou art not unacquainted with my moods, nor dost thou always preach to me."

"I fear that you overvalue my temper," said the maid, not a little flattered by the princess' words.

"No I do not," said Nest with emphasis. "Thou art more like a friend to me than a maid, Enid. But I have acted worse than an enemy to thee. I have kept thee from thy lover as though thou wast to blame because the prince has not returned. But thy kind heart will forgive my foolish jealousy, and receive my permission to grant thy sweetheart the interview he seeks, as evidence of my good will. Go, for he has been patiently waiting for an hour or more for an opportunity to see thee; and if he has received the least hint of the prince's whereabouts do not delay in bringing the news to me."

A hearty embrace and a kiss showed the gratitude of the maid, and she hastened from the room too full of happy anticipation to notice in the twilight the tears

that filled the eyes of her mistress. In the court-yard she was joined by Cadwallader, and as the evening was pleasant they took a short stroll in the direction of Conway.

"I began to think I should never see you again, my love," said the squire. "The sun has set but twice since my return, and yet it seems as though I had been waiting a whole lifetime for an opportunity to see you. One thing is sure, either you have lost your wonted fondness for me, or the princess has been too selfish to let us enjoy the privilege which fate has denied her. Why did you deny me the interview I so much desired last night? The lonely blackbird never longed so much to hear the sweet tones of his mate as I have to hear the music of your voice; the bee is never more anxious to kiss the smiling flowers than I have been to taste once more the honey of your lips. I saw you in the hall yesterday, and a glance at your surpassing beauty was like a ray of light to a prisoner in his dungeon."

"You men are all alike," said Enid. "Your tongues are as flattering as your hearts are selfish. You imagine that we women have no desire in life but to taunt you, or no duty but to fly at your bidding. Perhaps others have had longings no less intense than your own. You must not forget also that my mistress' disappointment and sorrow are as real to her as our pleasure at meeting each other again is to us, and that as yet my first duty is to her as yours is to the prince."

"Come now, Enid, let us forget our duties and troubles for a moment in the happiness of this meeting," said Cadwallader rather impatiently. "When I need a sermon I will seek a priest. You have not told me yet that you are glad to see me. Must I be punished because the princess is deprived of my master's company?"

"No, but before we talk of our own affairs I wish to know whether you have learned ought of the prince that my mistress does not already know?"

"If I had I would gladly communicate it to you, for the prince's misfortune is not a matter of indifference to me. Possibly we shall hear something about him soon, and I pray to the saints that we may. We must not be too hopeful, however, for we may never hear of him again."

The squire spoke sadly, and it was some time before he and Enid could forget the disagreeable in the agreeable. They returned to the castle, however, in the best of spirits.

CHAPTER XX.

Among Thieves.

Trahaiarn's fate, which as we have seen, was veiled in so much uncertainty at the castle was all too plain to the prince himself. He did not submit to it without resistance. He no sooner realized that he and his escort were being attacked than he unsheathed his sword and began to use it with as much effect as was possible in the darkness. Aside from the infliction of one or two fatal wounds, however, his exertions availed him little, for he was soon overpowered by the superior number of his assailants, who, disdainful of all consequences pounced upon him from all directions, while a greater number harassed the escort. Among the prince's assailants, and active as any of them, was the wily dissembler who had posed as a bard. Yet as we shall presently see he joined them in the attack because he desired to do so rather than because he was identified with them. As soon as he found that Trahaiarn was disarmed and bound, he withdrew into the woods on the right. Then a moment later while the prince was being carried past him still further into the thicket, and the rest of the assailants were leaving the scene of action in the same direction he was accosted by the leader of the band, and the two moved away together.

"I told thee that our scheme would not miscarry," said the pseudo-bard. "By St. Winifred, that upstart of a prince fell into our hands as easily as a bird into a snare."

"Ay, our scheme has worked admirably, and with but little loss methinks," was the reply. I must confess, however, that I feared the prince would not again be deceived by a bard after that episode at the castle."

"Thou hast never known of Howel the hermit making a failure of anything that he has undertaken to do, Hoel. I have acted many parts as occasion demanded, and would have maintained my double character unto this day had I not been surprised by the dastardly Cadivor and his men when I was giving Caradoc the succor he so much needed."

"It is well for you and for our scheme that the prince was so easily deceived. Now that he is in our power we can do with him as we please. It was a bright idea of yours to send for us, for a prince cannot be captured every day, and Caradoc will now be under obligation to us for our service. When do you expect a visit from him?"

"In a day or two. In the meantime we must keep our hiding place a profound secret from all but him."

From this conversation we rightly infer that the prince was in the hands of the outlaws of whom Hoel was chief, and that the hermit with the assistance of these denizens of the woods was still acting in the interests of Caradoc, lord of Portascyth.

When the moon came in sight, the outlaws, accompanied by the hermit, hastened with their captive through the forest in a northerly direction, arriving about midnight at a natural cavern not far from where Llanarmon now stands. This cavern extended, at that time, to an unknown depth, the mouth being much larger than the interior. It was known only to a few people, and those few with the exception of the outlaws themselves, rarely ventured near it. Nor did the outlaws

make it their permanent haunt, as they not infrequently occupied one of the caverns adjoining the hermit's cave. On this occasion, however, it was natural that they should seek this haunt, both for convenience sake and by reason of its distance from Rhuddlan. They were determined that the king, in case he should send out searching parties, should not find it easy to secure the prince. Hence by way of further precaution Hoel sent a spy in the guise of a beggar to watch developments in and about the castle, while he himself led the way into the cavern. At a signal given by him a sort of curtain was pushed aside revealing at a short distance a fire which was invisible from the outside. When all had passed inside, the curtain was again drawn to conceal the reflection of the fire from unfriendly eyes, a precaution rarely needed, as the fact that the outlaws haunted the place was of itself sufficient reason to most people for keeping away. Then Hoel commanded two of his men to unbuckle the prince's armor, while the others threw themselves on the ground around the fire. Judging that resistance would be of no avail, yet realizing that he would be more at the mercy of his captors without his armor Trahaiarn sullenly submitted to the inevitable. Meanwhile he endured the gaze of about thirty outlaws with a defiant look, and as his eyes wandered from face to face they unexpectedly encountered the familiar form of the disguised hermit.

"What brought you here, venerable bard?" said he with unfeigned astonishment.

"The same ill fate that brought you," said the pseudo bard with a sullenness that seemed very real.

"Ah, methought that even thieves honored your profession," said the prince indignantly.

"They may honor my profession, but certainly not

my person, for I had no more intention of coming here than you had," was the reply.

"Enough of this," said Hoel with a frown. "I am in no mood to listen to your whining. Iolo, let us have some refreshments."

Trahaiarn as well as the rest was sufficiently hungry by this time to welcome the prospect of something to eat; but it was by no means certain that his needs would be supplied, until cold beef, venison and bread were brought to him. As yet he had had but little opportunity to weigh his chances, or to indulge in thoughts of the princess. Nor under the circumstances was he inclined to join in the merriment of Hoel and his men. Long before the hilarity ceased, therefore, he fell into a deep sleep.

Upon waking he found himself lying on the bare ground near the fire, and recollecting where he was he rose to a sitting posture, and saw that he was alone with two armed outlaws. How long he had slept, or what had become of all the rest, were questions upon which the guards would give him no satisfaction. They were evidently the roughest and most villainous looking of the whole band, and the prince felt that his life, to say nothing of his comfort, was of little value in such presence. Indeed the more he thought of the matter the darker his prospects grew. Was the sun of his prosperity to set in the morning of its glory? Were all his hopes to perish by the hands of the basest assassins? Life never seemed so sweet as now, and the princess was never more lovely than Trahaiarn's imagination now pictured her to be.

Not far from the mouth of the cavern, on the bank of the river Alyn, was an artificial mound upon which stood the ruins of a castellet of much antiquity. In the

midst of these ruins stood the hermit and Caradoc, lord of Portascyth, engaged in a vigorous discussion.

"I am glad that the hateful sycophant is in our power at last," said Caradoc; "the saints have favored us for once. He has done not a few things to merit my revenge, and I am sure that the usurper's fate would have been settled long ago had he not interfered. But he shall no longer stand in my way, for I shall soon grant myself the pleasure of ridding the world of his presence."

"Methinks that the part that I have taken in his capture gives me a right to have a voice in this matter," said the hermit. "Methinks also that the wisdom of my counsel in the past ought to add importance to my words at this time. Were he put to death immediately thou wouldest be doing him a kindness; but if he be permitted to live, and his life rendered as miserable as threats and evil reports can make it, thou shalt have a fuller revenge, and he hell on earth."

"It goes hard with me to give up the pleasure I so much desire, though I much like your advice."

"The pleasure will keep, and time will increase it. Then when thou thinkest his cup of bitterness is full, and thy ambition satisfied, thou canst have thy pleasure with interest."

"But what if he should slip through our hands, and find his way to Rhuddlan?"

"It would be easier for a bird to escape from a snare than for him to gain his liberty, unless Hoel turns traitor, which is not more likely to occur than that Gryffydd should exchange his crown for a cowl, and his castle for a monastery or a cave."

Thus assured, Caradoc now left the ruins and entered the cavern, accompanied by the hermit. The prince still sat on the ground near the fire, silently regarding

the preparations that were being made for dinner, when the newcomers arrived upon the scene, and he readily recognized the one as the traitor whom he first knew as Idrys, and the other who no longer appeared in the guise of a bard, as the hermit whom he had suspected of harboring the traitor. Who had hired the outlaws to attack him was no longer a matter of conjecture. Even before Caradoc spoke a single word, Trahaiarn became convinced that he and no other man was responsible for his captivity, and this conviction filled him with hatred as intense as that which showed itself in his enemy's face. For a moment each regarded the other as two tigers might before pouncing upon each other, and their hands instinctively sought the weapons which the one missed, and the other was strongly tempted to use. Then the prince emitting the lava of his hatred exclaimed,

"So to thee, arch-traitor, and chief of cowards, I am indebted for my presence in this den of thieves. The act is worthy of the actor. Thou hast ever been as cowardly as thou art base. Thou didst not dare to attack me thyself, but thou must needs hire a band of assassins to fall upon me. Thou hast deprived me of liberty, but not of honor; of weapons, but not of courage. I spit in thy face, I curse thee and the whole brood of cowards to which thou dost belong. Would that I had my faithful sword that I might send thee to the bottomless pit!"

"I will send thee there instead," retorted Caradoc with a fiendish laugh, playing nervously with the hilt of his sword, while the hermit's hand rested on his arm. "Thou art now in my power, and I shall not forget to make thee pay dearly for thy present insolence no less than thy past offenses. The world is too full of base

sycophants like thee for its own good, and I shall do it the favor of plucking out thy heart, and throwing it to yonder dogs."

"Vile coward, thou canst well afford to heap threats upon the head of a weaponless foe," said the prince with intense bitterness. "It shows the consummate baseness of a heart that never knew the touch of heroism. Be it known to thee, however, that nothing that thou shalt do to my body can injure my soul. The sooner thou puttest thy threat into execution the better, for I hate thy presence more than I fear death.

"Then I will add to thy life the bitterness that should be in death," was the taunting reply.

"It is not wise to engender strife, but to turn away wrath, said the hermit. "He that loves not his enemy despises the gospel. Let peace prevail."

"Ha, ha, good! Give us a sermon, father Howel," cried Hoel, who with the rest of the outlaws now arrived upon the scene.

"Ay, let the magpie speak sentiments which his heart never felt, and the hawk preach to the sparrows," said the prince, sneeringly, as he resumed his place to wait developments.

CHAPTER XXI.

New Schemes.

Those concerned in the captivity of the prince kept their secret well. To all but themselves what had become of him was still a mystery. All efforts on the part of the king and the princess to find some trace of him had been fruitless. Messengers came and went, and in their comings and goings passed a beggar that for several days lingered in the town of Rhuddlan, occasionally stationing himself near the castle gate. None of them suspected that he could give them a clew which they so much desired to find. Beggars were so common that no one took any more notice of them than of the dogs which scoured the neighborhood for food. Among others Cadwallader passed this particular beggar once or twice, little suspecting that he had contended with him personally on the night of the attack. Perhaps his thoughts were too busy with a scheme that gradually took definite shape in his mind to think of the possibility of there being a spy so near the castle. At any rate one night not long after the beggar left the vicinity, he sought an interview with Enid, and told her that an important matter of business demanded his immediate departure for home.

After he was gone, Enid lingered an instant where she could unseen watch his departure; and wiping a tear from her eyes she returned to her young mistress.

"What kept ~~thee~~ so long, Enid?" said Nest fretfully.

"Thou mightest have known that I can ill spare thee at this time of day. I fear me that I am spoiling thee by over-indulgence."

"I am sorry, sweet mistress, that you should have occasion to think me neglectful," was the prompt reply; "but I am less to blame than Cadwallader."

"Cadwallader? He must, indeed, be bewitched by thy charms that he must seek thee so often. The prince was an ardent lover; yet he was not obtrusive in his attentions. If thou art wise, Enid, thou wilt nip this intimacy in the bud; otherwise I shall be constrained to dismiss thee."

"There is no cause for alarm, seeing that he sought me but to say farewell before his departure for home on important business."

"Be not so sure of that, Enid, for separation may be even a greater cause for alarm than intimacy. The saints forbid that thou shouldst suffer through thy love as I have. I shall never again be happy, unless some kind providence shall bring back my love."

Enid did not anticipate any such trouble as the princess alluded to, being naturally of a sanguine disposition. As the weeks passed into months, however, she began to realize the full force of Nest's remark, and to feel a degree of sympathy for her which was impossible before. Scarcely a day passed that she and her mistress did not take a look in different directions from the tower, and whenever they chanced to see a traveler on horseback or on foot they watched his approach with the greatest anxiety, until disappointment filled their hearts anew with pain. On one of these occasions their expectations were raised to the highest pitch by the appearance of a body of mailed men on the Chester road, but they were again doomed to disappointment, for the knights proved

to be Algar and his followers. Their arrival, however, served to divert the thoughts of Nest and her maid for a time at least, as it did to enliven things in and around the castle.

Aldyth was especially pleased to see her father once more, and so was Gryffydd, but for a different reason.

"By my faith," said the king, "thou wast never more welcome, father Algar, than thou art now. But I venture to predict that as usual no ordinary business brings thee to the court of thy son-in-law."

"It is the same old story," said the earl. "There is not room enough in England for the son of Godwin and me."

"What! thou art not again banished?" exclaimed Gryffydd with a frown, and receiving an affirmative answer he continued, "By my faith, I wish I were king of England long enough to teach that upstart of an earl a lesson. I assure thee he would not find me too pious to attend to my own affairs."

"Thou needst not be king of England in order to teach him a lesson," said Algar, "for if thy looks do not belie thee thou art as good a match for him now as when we met him in counsel at Billingsley."

"Then if I understand thee aright," was the reply, "thou wilt have me again make thy quarrel my own. I see not how I can assist thee seeing I have made a treaty with Edward."

"Treaties are not made of brass, nor are the Cambrians so loyal to the Saxons that they deem it a dis-honor to break faith with them," said Algar.

"I will give the matter due consideration," said the king. "Meanwhile thou must make free to enjoy thyself in my court as on former occasions."

Though the king gave Algar no positive answer that

day, the earl doubted not for a moment that he would give him the desired assistance. Therefore with his mind perfectly at rest on the subject Algar paid his daughter a visit. The Queen was sitting in her favorite place by the window at work on a piece of embroidery when her father was announced; but she immediately arose on his entrance and welcomed him in a manner most fitting in a daughter and a Queen.

"Time deals kindly with thy charms," said the earl, taking a proffered seat opposite his daughter and fixing his eyes upon her beautiful face.

"Do you indeed think so?" said Aldyth greatly pleased at the remark, while the color deepened on her cheek. "I am sorry that you have been less favored. Have you been well since you were here last?"

"Well, but not happy, Aldyth; no one can be happy with our beloved country in such unfriendly hands. The interests of all but fools must be sacrificed to satisfy the unbounded ambition of a low upstart and a tyrant."

"Methought that Edward was too busy with his prayers to burden his subjects with oppressive measures."

"Say that he is too pious to be wise and just, and thou wilt be nigh the truth, for in giving to his devotions the time which he ought to bestow on the affairs of state he but robs his kingdom of its due, and allows the haughty son of Godwin unlimited opportunities to insult and humiliate his betters, and to pave his own way to the throne he hopes will soon be vacant."

"Do you not speak unjustly of Harold the earl, father? True his race is not so noble as ours; but has he not acquitted himself nobly since his elevation to his father's place by the Witan?"

"Ay, if hostility to thy father and his house be a sign of nobility. Why am I banished for the second time

from the land of my fathers? Is it not because I dare to assert my rights, and because the despicable Harold is jealous of my power? Didst thou know my enemy as I know him thou wouldest not think it impossible to speak unjustly of him."

Aldyth was silenced but not convinced. Harold was her ideal hero. Though Gryffydd's wife her heart was never truly his. Before policy coupled her fate with that of the Welsh king the son of Godwin had unconsciously won a high place in her affections, though he had never shown the attentions of a lover. Her father's words, therefore, grated as much on her feelings as hers did on his, and to avoid a possible quarrel they dropped the subject and turned the conversation into more agreeable channels.

When Algar returned to the hall he was told that a message had just been received announcing the arrival at Conway of Magnus, King of Norway, with his fleet, and his intention of a peaceful and speedy visit to Gryffydd. Nothing could have pleased the earl better than this announcement, for he saw in it the possibility of a powerful ally. He knew that the relations between England and Norway were strained, and divined that the coming of the Norwegian king and fleet meant nothing but mischief to Edward's kingdom.

The next day Magnus himself, attended by a number of his chiefs, sailed up the river as far as the castle in a flat-bottomed boat, and upon landing was met by Gryffydd and Algar with their respective attendants, and led with all the pomp and display befitting the occasion into the king's hall, where a great feast was prepared in his honor. The Norwegian king was greatly pleased with his reception, and being seated on the right of his host he began at once to converse with him by the aid of an interpreter.

"Having come to lay my claims to the English throne," said Magnus after a few preliminary remarks, "and having learned that thou also, royal brother, hast no friendly feelings towards England I have presumed to come here to seek thine aid. Thy fame is not unknown in Norway; indeed who has not heard of Gryffydd the bold, whose victories equal the number of his battles?"

"By my faith," said the Welsh king with a touch of vanity, "how many more will seek the aid of my arms? But the more the merrier, if the hounds follow the same trail."

Elated with the prospect of military action once more and being much pleased with his royal acquaintance Gryffydd took an early opportunity to introduce Magnus to the Queen and Princess. And as the custom of the Welsh court forbade the presence of the fair sex in the king's hall on festive occasions Gryffydd led his royal guest into the queen's apartment, where Aldyth and Nest being forewarned of the intended visit received him in courtly attire and with due grace. Magnus was greatly impressed with the beauty of Gryffydd's wife and daughter, and though Aldyth had a decided advantage over Nest in that latter was thinner and paler than usual, he took a strong fancy to the princess, and being a widower in the prime of life he gave his thoughts such freedom as was possible under the circumstances. Obeying the proprieties that ruled the occasion, however, rather than his personal inclinations, he flattered the queen by paying her equal attentions with the princess. Nest, still cherishing her love for Trahairn, cared not how little he regarded her. But could she have read the thoughts of the Norwegian king she would have been much alarmed. Not that she disliked his looks, or had

any objections to being admired, but because she was supremely in love with another man. It was a relief to her when, presently, Magnus returned with Gryffydd into the hall, and she hastened to her own room to discuss his looks and bearing with her maid, who had already gleaned considerable information about him in one way and another.

CHAPTER XXII.

A Royal Suitor.

"Magnus," said Nest, speaking to her maid, "must be smaller than the traditional Norse kings, for he is but of medium size. Were his face not so long he would be more handsome, for his clear complexion goes well with his fair hair and blue eyes."

"Methinks a clear complexion more becoming with deep red hair and dark blue eyes," interrupted Enid, paying her mistress a genuine compliment.

"Thou art not alone in that opinion," said the princess coloring slightly, "for Trahaiarn seemed to be similarly minded. Were I to express an opinion it would be in favor of a complexion different from my own."

"What do you think of the king's attire?" the maid hastened to ask, fearing that Nest would fix her thoughts once more on the prince to the exclusion of all other subjects.

"It becomes him well. Thou sawest his winged helmet and coat of ringmail when he arrived. Deigning to wear neither of these in the queen's hall he appeared before us in a sort of red silk robe, which must be in Norway a mark of royalty."

"Having divested himself of his coat of mail and helmet he must also have appeared before you without his battle-axe which has occasioned so much talk in the hall, and which they say once belonged to his father."

"Ay. He thought no doubt that nature had furnished him with weapons that would be more successful in the

sort of warfare in which he was just then engaged. Nor do I think him much mistaken so far as one of us are concerned. But my heart felt neither worse nor better after his visit notwithstanding his admiring glances."

"I hope his heart was as little touched as your own, for being free to marry his visit might result in mischief to more than the King of England."

"Let thy mind be at rest concerning him, for Rhuddlan Castle contains no more beauty than he has often seen before, and he will depart stricken as little with female charms as when he came."

The heart's desire sometimes drives the mind to a conviction that is at variance with facts, and it was so in the case of Nest, for the king of Norway at that very moment, being favorably impressed with her charms, and thinking that an alliance with the daughter of so valiant a king as Gryffydd would be advantageous to him, was meditating as to how he might successfully approach his host on the subject. There was scarcely any doubt in his mind as to the result. He was confident that Gryffydd would be glad to have him for a son-in-law, and that he could win the princess' consent. Many of Norway's fair daughters would have been only too glad to have the chance she was about to have.

With these thoughts uppermost in his mind Magnus not unnaturally assumed a more cheerful aspect, and astounded his followers with an unwonted flow of wit. Two days of engrossing preparations, however, prevented Gryffydd from giving him the opportunity he so much desired, and his patience, which was as weak as his actions were brisk, was fast giving way to irritation when the Welsh king learning that he desired a private interview, readily granted it to him. Accompanied by only an interpreter, whom Magnus had sworn into abso-

lute secrecy, the two kings retired to Gryffydd's chamber, which was nearly as devoid of ornament as the hall, and seated themselves on large cushions on the rush covered floor near a lattice-window. The reputation of the Norwegian king for being well-spoken was properly sustained both in the way in which he introduced his subject and in the manner in which he supported his proposal after he had made it known. He alluded to the love with which the princess' comeliness had inspired him, the high honor which he could confer upon her, and the advantages to be derived from such a union as he proposed.

As might be expected Magnus' proposal took Gryffydd by surprise, nothing being farther from his mind at the time than an alliance between his daughter and the king of Norway. As the royal suitor proceeded in his well-conducted suit, however, surprise gave way to pleasure, and by the time Magnus ceased speaking the Welsh king was greatly in favor of the proposal. He was not ignorant of his daughter's passion for Trahaiarn, nor did he expect that she would willingly consent to marry his royal guest; but since he had every reason to believe that the prince would never return, and since a proposal of marriage from so great and bold a warrior as Magnus was by no means to be despised, he secretly vowed to do all he could to aid his suit. In his reply to the Norwegian king, however, he thought it wise to manifest less pleasure than he felt, and to inform him that he might not find the princess as responsive to his suit as he would wish, owing to the pre-occupied state of her affections. Then finding Magnus still anxious to press his suit he promised to arrange a meeting between him and Nest in the queen's hall in the near future, and the interview was brought to a close.

Meanwhile Nest, perfectly unconscious of what was transpiring in the king's chamber, sat in her room gazing out of the window with a far-away look in her eyes, while her maid sat busily knitting at her feet. The room was perfectly still, and with the exception of an occasional glance at her mistress the maid seemed as abstracted as the princess, who unconsciously toyed with a locket made sacred by the lock of black hair which it contained. At length, however, both were aroused from their abstraction by a knock at the door, and Nest glancing at the long tunic of pure white linen which graced her shapely figure to see if it was in proper order lifted her eyes in time to see the queen enter.

"You are certainly most fortunate, daughter," said Aldyth in a flutter of excitement, "for his majesty the king of Norway, desires to make your closer acquaintance. Nay, frown not, for you dare not ill-treat your father's royal guest without forfeiting your right to paternal favor forever."

"Why should he seek to converse with me," asked Nest petulantly, while an apprehensive look appeared on Enid's face. "I care not to see him, why should he care to see me?"

"Do not disgrace your father's court by your waywardness," said the queen, growing pale with displeasure. "Go, and I will remain here till your return."

Fearing to displease her father more than desiring to please her mother the princess now reluctantly left the room and entered the queen's apartment with beating heart and trembling limbs, realizing that it was one thing to hear stories about Norse kings and quite another thing to have to entertain one. As yet it had not entered her mind that Magnus expected more than to be merely entertained."

As she entered the room Magnus received her in a manner in which a degree of lover's embarrassment mingled with kingly dignity, and when both were seated the king proceeded to say through his interpreter,

"However surprising and unexpected this visit may be to you, noble princess, it is to me a matter of unusual interest. He that has seen the sun wishes to see it again, and he that has seen the beauty and inhaled the fragrance of a rare flower is anxious to do so again. I flatter myself with the hope that the lovely daughter of the royal Gryffydd has not wholly forgotten my former visit to this room, though it gave me far more pleasure than I could hope to give in return, so much pleasure indeed that I have looked forward with no little delight to the privilege of a second visit."

"The royal Magnus chooses to be very complimentary in his speech," said Nest struggling with a lump in her throat, and with an apprehension that was fast becoming a conviction that the king's visit purposed to be a serious matter.

"Royalty must ever pay homage to beauty," continued the king, "and beauty is never more charming than when wedded to royalty. Sweet lady I love you, and want you to be mine. It has pleased the saints to make me the royal head both of Norway and Denmark. Hundreds of thousands obey my call, and my victories are not few. Vast possessions, countless treasures, and costly jewels are mine. I lack but your beauty and love to make my happiness complete and my court without a rival."

"Surely all this is a mistake," said Nest much bewildered and keeping the tears back with difficulty. "I am not in a position to listen to such words even from the King of Norway. Has no one informed you—has not

my father told you that I am already betrothed to another?"

"Your father, fair princess, has told me all," was the reply, "and I have both his sanction to my proposal, and his promise that you shall be my bride. A beauty such as yours is ill-bestowed upon the dead, and your love needs other than the dust to feed upon. There is not a maiden in the whole of my dominion who would refuse the honor I deign to offer you. Then be my queen sweet Nest."

"And you would have my father force me to marry you?" said the princess with extreme agitation and flashing eyes. "You would upbraid me for being loyal to the man whom dead or alive I love? Honor indeed! is it an honor to wear a crown without jewels? Much less to force marriage where mutual love is impossible."

"Everything is honorable in love and war," said Magnus with the air of a man who will have his own way at all costs. "Willing or unwilling thou shalt be mine."

"Never!" cried the princess springing to her feet. "If you are a king your dominion extends not to Cambria, least of all over my person. Do your worst I shall never be the wife of such a man as you."

"Thy father, proud maid, is of a different mind, and so am I," was the haughty and self-assuring reply.

Nest made no response but sailed from the room with the air of an offended queen, leaving Magnus in a state of irritation mingled with admiration. Upon reaching her own room, however, her manner changed, and covering her flushed face with her hands she threw herself on the divan in a flood of tears.

The queen having heard much of the conversation through the unlatched door, and being indignant at what she considered unbearable stubbornness and weakness

in the princess made no effort to console her, but went immediately to her own apartment, slamming the door between the two apartments by way of emphasis to her displeasure. Enid, however, shedding sympathetic tears in spite of herself sought as usual to soothe the highly taxed nerves of her mistress. As yet she knew nothing of what had been said in the queen's hall, but the violent emotions of the princess confirmed certain apprehensions she had entertained, and she thought what a terrible thing it would be to have to marry even a king against one's will. Nest's mind also ran in the same channel for she presently cried wringing her hands,

"O, why have I lived to see this day? Why am I not with my betrothed if indeed he be dead? Why should I be expected to become the wife of a man who, though a king, can never be to me what even the memory of poor Trahaiarn is? Ah, I shall never sée another such as he."

Little by little the maid learned the gist of the conversation between the princess and the Norwegian king, but at first she could offer no suggestion satisfactory either to herself or her mistress.

The thought of marrying Magnus under any circumstances was unbearable to Nest; but how was she to avoid it? An early visit from her father on the day after the Norwegian king's proposal forced her into a promise she would not otherwise have given, and which when given she had no real intention of fulfilling. Gryffydd spoke mildly and persuasively at first, alluding to the unlikelihood that Trahaiarn would ever return, and mentioning the advantages to be gained by a matrimonial alliance with the royal house of Norway. But finding his daughter immovable he became angry and resorted to upbraiding and threats.

"If thou marry not the king of Norway," said he, bringing his fist down upon his knee by way of emphasis, "thou art no daughter of mine, and I will shut thee up in the dungeon to be a prey for rats and the horrors of darkness."

"Do give me more time to decide, dear father," said Nest, terrified by her father's awful threat.

"That cannot be," continued the irate king. The preparations are nearly ready, and we must leave for England early to-morrow morning. I must have thy promise now to marry him."

"Oh, not now, say not now," cried Nest in the agony of despair, throwing herself on her knees in front of the king.

Touched by his daughter's extreme agony Gryffydd relented so far as to intimate that a conditional promise might do for the present. Nest therefore seeing no alternative said,

"If it must be I promise to marry him at the close of the campaign if the prince come not to claim me in the meantime. But it will be a loveless match, for I can never love a man who would marry me against my will."

Convinced that Trahaiarn would never return and that, therefore, there would be no obstacle in the way at the close of the campaign the king passed into the queen's hall, and after listening a moment to a tirade against his daughter he rejoined Magnus to acquaint him with the result of the interview. This done the two kings and the earl spent the rest of the day in reviewing the troops, and next morning marched against England.

CHAPTER XXIII.

In the Robber's Den.

"Were I not a beggar I would be a king; leastwise were I a king I might wish myself a beggar."

"Not if you had the promise of the hand of so lovely a princess as Nest in marriage."

"Or had such powerful allies as Gryffydd and Algar to aid you against your enemies."

Such were some of the remarks made by a small group of beggars, who, standing near the castle gate, watched the departure of the allied forces. The first speaker was a little above the average in height, and but for a pair of crutches and ragged and filthy appearance he seemed the equal of any in the Welsh army. He was but little known to the other beggars, having been seen but once or twice before in Rhuddlan, and being freer to talk about matters in general than about his own affairs. Lingering with the others until the rear of the marching column was lost in a dense mist which had not yet allowed the morning sun to kiss the few scattered flowers which heralded the coming of spring, he presently left his beggarly companions on some pretense, and slowly betook himself on his crutches in a southerly direction through the town, occasionally stopping to solicit alms of those he met. At length finding himself beyond the limits of the town he approached a gate in the hedge-row on the left, and veiled by the mist he threw his crutches into a wheat field and cleared the gate at one leap. Then

hiding both the crutches and his rags in the hedge he pursued a course parallel to the highway, perfectly sound in every limb, and clad in the simple garb of a peasant. Screened by the hedge-row, in which an occasional cow-slip nestled at the base of the green, neatly trimmed hawthorne, and an occasional robin or thrush lingered a moment in search of food or to indulge in song, he finally reached the spot where the public highway turned in the direction of St. Asaph, and feeling that there was no further need of concealment he now followed the road. A brisk walk brought him to the "Red Dragon," and after a good draught of cwrw he continued his course. Towards sunset he arrived at the robber's den, and saluting the sentinel pacing in front of the cavern he passed into the interior. Then pushing aside the thick blanket which served as a curtain he found himself face to face with Hoel, the robber chief, whose features were dimly discerned in the light of a fire, around which were sitting several men whose rough exterior was in perfect keeping with their grotesque surroundings.

Indifferent to everything around him Trahaiarn sat on the ground a short distance from the fire with his back against the side of the cavern, and his head resting on his arms. In this dark and cheerless place he had no idea of time. The lack of appetite resulting from petty annoyances, inhuman threats, and constant brooding over his hopeless condition, together with his cold and disagreeable surroundings had robbed him of much flesh and strength, and though he still longed to be with the idol of his heart he had given up trying to invent a way of escape. Sometimes he dreamed that he was with Nest once more, and saw her shedding tears of sympathy as she listened to his tales of suffering and woe; but such dreams were far from conducive to his peace of mind,

for they always left him in deeper despair. It so happened that he was in one of his most unhappy moods on this occasion, and any ordinary conversation would have been unheeded by him. But the mention of names and places dear to him made him specially attentive to what the spy now began to relate, although he gave no indication of being interested.

"Like all true patriots," said the spy with a hypocritical grin, "ye will doubtless rejoice at the marriage of the comely daughter of the illustrious son of Llewelyn."

"Nest married! To whom?" cried a chorus of voices.

"She is married to a king!" was the reply. "Magnus, King of Norway, led to Gryffydd's court by his desire to secure timely assistance against England was captivated by the surpassing beauty of Princess Nest, and left the castle only after winning her for a bride."

"Methought the princess was too devoted to the memory of her former lover to marry even a king," said Hoel, winking at his men and glancing in the direction of Trahaiarn.

"She did at first swear by heaven and earth that she would never love another," continued the spy; "but who has confidence in a woman's word? A lily bends before every passing breeze, and footprints on the sand vanish before the aspiring waves. The princess is not an exception to her sex that she should prefer a dead prince to a live king."

"What thou sayest is true no doubt," remarked Hoel, "but there are those who think a dead king better than life itself."

"True, for where the desire is father of the thought there is no accounting for the opinions or actions of men. At least some who have long sought Gryffydd's life will not rest until they see him dead, and in pursuance of

their dominant desire they have again set a trap for him. If he return alive to Rhuddlan from the present campaign it will be a miracle more wonderful than that performed by St. Beuno when he replaced St. Winifred's head upon her shoulders."

Trahaiarn scarcely knew how to regard what he now heard. He had been forced to listen to so many stories during his captivity that were plainly intended to add to his sufferings that he found it difficult to believe that what was now said was true. Yet he could not dismiss it from his thoughts. It might well be true that the dastardly Caradoc would again try to assassinate king Gryffydd, he thought, and it was not impossible that the king of Norway should seek the aid of one whom he knew to be no friend to England. But would Nest look with favor upon his advances should he wish to make her his queen? Would it be possible for her to forget her betrothed so soon? So soon! why it was several months since she saw him last, and doubtless had every reason to think him dead! Why should she longer hope for his return, or throw away an opportunity to marry a king if he sought her hand? Would not Gryffydd himself be likely to encourage an alliance so favorable to all concerned? Trahaiarn's heart sickened at these thoughts, the more so because he had no means of knowing how much was true or false in what he had heard, or whether it had any foundation in truth or not. Yet he would die rather than give his tormentors any reason to believe that he was affected by their cruel thrusts. This, however, made it only the more difficult for him to endure a suspense to which there seemed no end, and the sting of jealousies and suspicions that would obtrude upon his thoughts.

Hoel and his men were somewhat disappointed at the

seeming indifference of the prince to a bit of news that might reasonably be supposed to concern him not a little. They continued to torment him in various ways, however, going so far one day as to relate in his hearing that Gryffydd had been assassinated, and that Magnus had grown tired of the princess and had abandoned her, and that she was now in Harold's power. To make matters worse also the hermit gave color to the false report by paying him a visit of consolation.

"My heart bleeds for thee, my son," said he, seating himself on the ground beside the captive, and simulating the expression and tone of a spiritual comforter. "The hand of affliction has been heavy upon thee of late, and thy sorrows have been rapidly multiplying."

"Hold thy peace, thou base hypocrite," said the prince giving the hermit a vigorous push which afforded the listening robbers much inward amusement. "I will have none of thy empty cant. Had I my sword I would do for thee what justice has long neglected to do."

"It will avail thee nothing to kick against the pricks, my son," continued the wily Einion, "or for me to become angry at thy ill-tempered words. It is my duty to offer thee the consolations of religion whether thou wilt hear or forbear, and the saints forbend that I should ever neglect my duty even in the face of insults. Thou art beginning to realize that man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward, or that man that is born of woman is of few days and full of trouble. Pax vobiscum!"

Trahaiarn perceiving that the easiest way to get rid of the canting hermit was to pay as little attention as possible to him, remained silent during the remainder of his obtrusive service; and at length his patience was rewarded by Einion's departure.

It seemed as if all the powers of darkness had con-

spired against the prince, for soon after the hermit's departure Caradoc entered the cave and after a brief interview with Hoel turned his attention to Trahaiarn. It was now four weeks since the spy had returned from the castle; therefore Caradoc's appearance at this time involved no contradiction of the new plot implied in the spy's false report. As a matter of fact, however, Caradoc was weaving a plot which demanded his presence in the south while the allies were invading England. But he readily fell in with the cruel farce that Hoel and the hermit had been acting, and startling the prince from a state of unconsciousness he said with a malignant smile,

"The prosperity of the wicked is of short duration, the day of vengeance has come at last. The proud exalted himself, but the hand of the mighty overthrew him. He wooed and another has taken his betrothed. He stood in defense of tyranny against the stroke of justice, but his spear was broken in pieces and his shield wrenched from his hand."

He paused thinking that the prince would add to his pleasure by resenting his words; but Trahaiarn resting his head on his shackled limbs uttered not a word. For once he succeeded in controlling his temper.

"Has the vain boaster lost his tongue?" continued the vindictive lord, irritated by the prince's silence, "or is he playing a part which belongs only to the meek? I will give thee a true reason for silence, thou base dissempler. I will pluck thy tongue from the roots and fling it into yonder fire."

Again there was silence. Trahaiarn moved not a muscle. The robbers looked on with the immovability of statues. Caradoc alone made any movement, and it was to unsheathe his sword; but before he had time to carry out his intention Hoel grasped his arms. A brief

struggle followed during which Trahaiarn sprang to his feet trembling with a passion he could no longer restrain.

"Let the damnable coward strike," cried he. "If there is a hell it is infinitely preferable to this intolerable place."

"He shall strike," said Hoel, "but not yet. Thou shalt make the acquaintance of Gwyn ap Nudd only after thy cup of bitterness is full on earth."

"Thou art right, Hoel," said Caradoc, recovering his self-control. "I was too hasty. To-morrow is the anniversary of my father's death, and I shall celebrate it in a manner becoming the occasion. Until then relax not your vigilance over our victim."

Among those who witnessed this exciting episode was one whose sympathy with one of the actors was such that he exercised self-constraint with the greatest difficulty. In appearance there was no striking difference between him and the rest of Hoel's men. He had belonged to the band about three months, and had gradually ingratiated himself into favor with the robber chief. He was glad that the by-play of passion that he had just witnessed had ended so favorably, but there was a greater joy awaiting him. He had long wished to be detailed as one of the prince's guards in the absence of the rest of the band, and his longing was never so strong as when he saw Trahaiarn resuming his former position with a look that betokened intense hatred and misery combined, and watched Caradoc after a moment's whispered talk with Hoel leaving the cave. He was wise enough not to betray his feelings, however, by any outward tokens of anxiety. From certain remarks that Hoel had made during the day he knew that a raid was to be made on the estate of a chief in the vicinity of Mold; but it was not until evening that he learned that he and the man

who had played the part of a beggar near the castle were to be left to guard the prince. Soon after to his great inward delight the raiding party was gone, and he was in the possession of the opportunity which he had so long desired.

"I had much rather be on the way to Mold than to be assigned to this duty," said he in a voice that sounded strangely familiar to the prince, though he wisely showed no sign of recognition.

"Hadst thou belonged to the band as long as I have," was the reply, "thou wouldest be glad to have rest even at the cost of increased responsibility. Besides, thou shouldest be thankful for this evidence of the chief's favor, for there are few he would trust with this important charge."

"My master has never had any reason to doubt my fidelity, and I expect to use this opportunity to serve him to the advantage of all concerned."

The already alert ear of the prince missed not a single word of the conversation, and the last sentence conveyed a meaning to him of which one of the guards at least had no suspicion. Though he simply shifted his position and cast a careless glance at the fire, on the opposite side of which the two guards sat on a log with their swords resting on their knees, his heart beat fast with renewed hope, and a wink from one of the men assured him that he had not misunderstood the hint couched in the words he had just heard. Every fiber of his being was thrilled with anticipation, and his mind was flooded with thoughts that he had not dared to entertain for a month.

"The fire needs replenishing; be kind enough to throw a stick or two on, Owen, seeing that thou art near the wood."

So said one of the guards, and while the other leaned

over to pick up a stick he knocked him senseless with the hilt of his sword. Then with wonderful agility he sprang to the prince's side, and while he removed his fetters Trahaiarn whispered excitedly,

"God bless thee, Cadwallader; this is more than I ever dared to hope. Thou shalt be richly rewarded for this."

"There, you are free," said the faithful squire, "follow me, and let your step be lighter than your heart. Thanks will keep; this is a time for action."

Glancing at the senseless form near the fire the two moved stealthily towards the curtain which concealed the interior of the cave, and pushing it aside Cadwallader saw the dim outlines of the sentinel only a few paces from him, and sending an arrow through his heart he and the prince hastened by the expiring man in a direction different from that usually taken by the robbers. Cadwallader showed that he was perfectly familiar with the locality, and soon conducted Trahaiarn in a round-about way to the road that led northward, the starlight enabling them to proceed with comparative ease. As they hurried along the squire said,

"Methinks I did the world a great kindness in ridding it of that accursed sentinel, for he was the most murderous of the whole of that ungodly brood. I would have dispatched the other also had I had my wits about me."

"Thou hast nothing to regret, Cadwallader, for am I not a free man once more thanks to thy skill and forethought? Thou shalt tell me presently how thou camest to be with the robbers, but now for heaven's sake tell me what thou knowest of the princess?"

"Hark," said the squire, "I hear voices. Let us hide behind this thornbush."

They did so, and soon their ears caught these words, "Ay, the King of Norway returned with his prospec-

tive father-in-law last night, and the wedding was to take place at the castle to-night or early to-morrow morning."

"I cannot see wny it should be to-night, seeing that it is the custom of our people to have weddings in the morning."

"They say it was Magnus' wish to have it to-night at an early hour, and if he had his desire they have been married long ere this."

"Ha, ha, were it not for the fact that my father's slayer is still living it would be a capital way to punish our captive to release him in time to see his betrothed the wife of another."

"Ay, but since Gryffydd is not dead we must add to the miseries of the prince and send him where he can do no more mischief. To-morrow will—"

The speaker, who was none other than the hermit, did not finish the sentence, for an arrow from the hand of Trahaïrn brought him to the ground, and Caradoc his companion would have shared his fate had he not taken to his heels in the direction of the cavern. Having heard enough to make him extremely desirous to reach the castle, which he knew to be more than twenty miles away, the prince did not stop to see whether the hermit was dead or not, but hastened away with his squire.



CHAPTER XXIV.

A Dreaded Event.

We can better understand the situation in which the princess found herself on the day set apart for the wedding by a consideration of the manner in which she spent the interval between the departure and return of the invading army. Her royal suitor was scarcely out of sight of the castle than she began to upbraid herself for promising to marry him under any circumstances whatever. Of course, the promise would signify nothing if Trahaiarn should return in time to claim her as his own, but the hope of her ever seeing him again hung on a very slender thread. What then should she do? For hours she wrestled with her trouble alone, seeking no divine help, yielding to no suggestion of her maid. But towards evening finding her burden unbearable she betook herself to the small oratory adjoining the royal chapel, and sank in the extreme agony of her heart before an image of St. Winifred, who, despite the increasing popularity of the Virgin Mary, was still in great favor as a patroness of Gwynedd. Alone and in the anguish of her spirit she poured out her complaint, and besought the saint to cause the return of her betrothed if he was still living, or if he was dead to give her strength to pass through the ordeal awaiting her. Conscious as she was of her passionate nature she was afraid that in a weak moment she might yield to an impulse wholly inconsistent with the promise she had made, and therefore she urged her second petition with more

earnestness and persistence than she did the other. At length feeling much relieved and believing that the help she so much needed would be given her she returned to her room and ere long was fast asleep.

On the following day she was much improved in spirits and in looks, and during the next three weeks the queen found her applying herself to the work of preparation for the wedding with far greater vim and interest than she had thought possible under the circumstances. Like all the ladies of rank in England and Wales at that time Nest had not been above learning such domestic accomplishments as were at a later date considered fit only for women of the middle and lower classes. Being an adept at carding wool, spinning, weaving, sewing, and embroidery, her deft hands had produced many a fine article which would now be called into requisition as a part of her wedding outfit. Among other things she had several gowns, tunics, kirtles, and mantles of home-made linen or woolen cloth, with flowers, animals, stars and historical subjects worked on them in embroidery. These articles were of different colors and of a quality that distinguished people of rank from those who were socially their inferiors. A lady of humble station would have considered herself well provided for her marriage had she no more in her trousseau than the princess already had, but Nest, and especially the queen thought the rank of the prospective bridegroom demanded a larger outfit. Accordingly the queen's hall was soon converted into a veritable workshop with looms and needles in full operation. While the coarser work was consigned to the maids on this occasion the princess and her mother devoted their attention to two court dresses, one of scarlet and the other of purple. These colors being in great favor among the Scandinavians the

queen was bound to have her daughter clad in a manner agreeable to their taste. Nor did her anxiety to conform to the customs of the people among whom the princess expected to live stop with colors.

"I am at a loss to know what figure would best suit the king," said she looking critically at the dress. "Had I only my own taste to satisfy I would embroider alternate rows of roses and lilies; but some other design may better please his majesty."

"Methinks a large battle-axe embroidered with yellow silk might be most agreeable to him," said the princess with ill-suppressed sarcasm.

"No, it shall be a ship," said the queen. "It shall be an exact copy of the 'Bison.' Magnus thinks more of his ship than of his battle-axe. I saw it the other day at Conway. In your father's fleet there is not one like it. It has more than thirty banks of rowers. There was a great buffalo head on the bow, and its tail on the stern-post. Both the head and the tail together with the sides of the ship were gilded over, and therefore can be worked with yellow silk or gold thread."

"That might please the vanity of the king," said Nest, "but I fear his court would mistake the dress for a chart and me for a fool. No, flowers or birds or nothing for me."

It was a fortunate circumstance that the queen's chamberlain appeared at this juncture announcing the desire of a Saxon peddler to show the ladies of the court a large assortment of dress goods direct from London and Paris. The queen's mind was thus diverted from a subject that might have resulted in a quarrel.

"Bring him in," said she, "that we might examine his bundle. Like as not he has never seen either London or Paris, much less his goods."

"Your majesty shall judge for yourself as to the genuineness of my goods," said the peddler now entering the room and proceeding at once to open his pack. Then while Aldyth and Nest with their attendants crowded around him and uttered exclamations of delight at what they saw he held up one piece of goods after another for their inspection.

"This," said he, "was made for royalty to wear. It is the best piece of cendal that ever saw an English loom."

"I have seen better," said the queen. "Have you no foreign cloth?"

"I have, royal madam, and such as your exquisite taste cannot help admiring," said the peddler, spreading his imported goods before the delighted gaze of the ladies. "This is a Russian damask in silk and gold, just what your majesty needs, if I may presume to say so. And here is a fine specimen of Sicilian silk of the most approved pattern. You would search the realm in vain for such another piece. I have but a few yards left."

"Then have those to whom you sold the rest left the kingdom?" asked Nest, thinking that the peddler's words did not hold well together.

"They were never in it to my knowledge," was the prompt reply. "All but this remnant was sold in England. The first piece I sold to the lady of England, who, you know, is the wife of King Edward, and the last piece was bought by the wife of the young earl Morcar."

The queen allowed the reference to her brother's wife to pass unnoticed, and finding that the remnant would be a valuable addition to the princess' outfit, she bought it after a successful attempt to beat down the price. Nest also was permitted to buy such minor articles as she needed, including a supply of gold thread.

Upon the peddler's departure the ladies resumed their work, and soon were engaged in an animated conversation touching the merits of the various cloths they had seen. Glad would the maids have been to become the possessors of some of the fine specimens of goods which the peddler had displayed, but according to the custom of the Welsh court they had to be content to wear the clothes discarded by the queen and princess.

During the excitement attending the preparations for the wedding Nest's mind as well as her hands were too busy to allow her to indulge in melancholy reflections, but the busiest time was scarcely over before she again began to show signs of sadness. Repeated visits to the oratory no longer brought her relief. Each day increased her repugnance for an alliance in the anticipation of which her heart had never taken any delight. While in this mood she sought the confessional, which differed but little from that in Catholic use to-day.

"Holy father," said she, kneeling before one of the openings and addressing the king's chaplain, "I have been sore pressed of late, and in my distress I have offended St. Winifred so that she no longer intercedes for me."

"That is bad, my child, that is bad!" was the reply. "But what is the nature of thy offense? Tell me that."

"I know not, holy father, unless it be that I have wished that the King of Norway would be slain during this campaign."

"And is not that enough to offend even God himself? Is he not to be thy husband, and is it not a sin to rebel against God's will as well as to wish evil to those who love us?"

Choked with sobs and blinded with tears the princess

made no immediate reply; but presently she said with an effort,

"I do not want to marry him, nor do I wish to break my promise; yet I know that if I become his wife I shall be forever miserable."

"I am sorry for thee, my child; yet I will not encourage thee in rebellion against what is a plain, though painful duty. Repent of thy sins and face the inevitable with the courage of a true Christian. God wills that thou bear this burden, which the hand of providence has laid on thy shoulders, to his honor and glory and the salvation of thy soul."

"Then forgive my sins, holy father, and aid me with your prayers that I might do my duty."

"May the Lord absolve thee. I will certainly offer prayers in thy behalf."

The princess now left the chapel in which stood the confessional, and returned to her room somewhat strengthened in her purpose to perform a painful obligation.

During her absence word had reached the castle of the approach of the two kings with their forces, and upon entering her room she learned the news from her maid. There had been times in her life when she would have hailed the news with joy; but for reasons which were far too vivid to her mind she felt no inclination as of old to mount the tower and witness the arrival of the army. Nor did she later, owing to a severe headache, permit Magnus to see her.

The circumstance which debarred the lover from seeing the princess was no obstacle to the father, for not long after his return Gryffydd entered Nest's room with fatherly greeting and tidings of joy. He said he was sorry she could not see Magnus, for he had talked about

her all the way home. He also spoke in complimentary terms of his military qualifications and exploits. Nor did he forget to mention the successful manner in which the allied forces had invaded England far into the interior, and that they would have forced their way to the heart of London had not Harold persuaded Edward to restore Algar again to his favor and his own estates, and to offer satisfactory terms to Magnus. All this, however, failed to interest the princess, although she tried to master herself sufficiently to appear pleased at what he said.

Returning to the hall Gryffydd soon found himself and his prospective son-in-law the center of a large group of courtiers, and the most of the night was spent in the hall amidst feasting and drinking. Early the next morning as the festivities were being renewed the king's servants applied themselves to the work of decoration, a work that would have been previously attended to had it been known when the royal warriors would return. All the prominent rooms were adorned with wreaths and festoons, and arches of evergreen were erected in the court-yard and over the approaches to the castle. The chapel was also decorated with flowers and evergreens. Nor was the larder neglected, it being decorated with beef, mutton, and fowl in immense quantities.

While these necessary preparations were going on Nest was trying to compose herself for an interview with Magnus. Though she would have been glad to forego this ordeal she tried to persuade herself that the sooner she began to make the acquaintance of her future husband the better, since providence had meant them for each other. She was still struggling with herself when she was summoned to the queen's hall to meet Magnus. Being as brave as she was passionate she went imme-

dately to the king, who received her with a most pleasant smile and helped her to a divan beside him. They were both somewhat embarrassed, yet each was determined to make the best of the situation. Magnus had the advantage over Nest, however, in that he was aided by love. The princess was to him the most beautiful woman he had ever seen, and as he led her to the divan the touch of her hand sent a thrill through his whole being. Yet what was to him an extreme pleasure was to the princess anything but a pleasure. Her repugnance did not, as she had hoped it would, give way to a more favorable feeling. But she did her utmost to conceal it under an effort to be at least civil if not responsive; and though the conversation between them related to their marriage the princess behaved in a manner much to her credit. Once only did her repugnance threaten to destroy her self-control, namely, when Magnus bent over and kissed her. But she wisely cut the interview short at this point, on the plea that her headache had returned.

"I am sorry, love, that the wedding cannot take place to-night," said the king as they parted. "But I will not insist further since it is the custom of your people to marry in the morning. May time drive his chariot a little faster to-night than is his wont, and may the saints give you sweet rest and happy dreams. But why must you hasten?"

"I wish it were otherwise, but I must go," was the hasty reply.

"Then good-by, love, till we meet again," said the king.

The princess made a faint response and hastened from the room, while Magnus disappointed at the shortness of the interview, but consoling himself that before long this bewitching bit of humanity would be under his ab-

solute control, returned to the festive hall accompanied by his interpreter. He had no idea of the supreme effort that the interview had cost his intended bride, or of the new resolve that was even now gaining stronger hold upon her.

Time passed swiftly with everybody but Magnus. The king's hall was never more full of guests, nor the guests more full of drink. Gryffydd was at his best, and so was Idwal, the family bard. The late incursion into England and the coming marriage of the princess furnished him with topics most agreeable to his awen (muse). He described advancing hosts and contending foes, the groans of the dying and the shout of victory. He sang of a royal warrior from across the seas with the heart of a lion and the arm of a giant; of a princess light as spring, beautiful as summer, bright as day; and of the marriage of two rivers, united never to part, one in purpose, one in love, ever murmuring in sweet content. His harp catching the inspiration of his heart vied with his voice, and Gryffydd declared that his bard had never acquitted himself so well. But at length both his voice and his hands grew weary, and he fell asleep while other bards displayed their skill. The day passed into night and the night into day once more, and though Magnus was one of the last to fall asleep he was among the first to waken. The harps were now silent, but a chorus of birds filled the air with music. Did Nest hear those delightful strains? Ay, doubtless, for this was to be her wedding day. Like her intended husband she, no doubt, had risen this morning before the sun. Would that she could take a stroll with him just now through the flower-clad fields to see the sun rise. But that was not to be. He needed the morning air, however, therefore he would wander a short distance by himself. Leaving the hall he

entered a field back of the castle where a vision of daisies, celandines, and dandelions met his gaze. The birds were still singing and the morning breeze was laden with fragrance. The king of day now glanced at the King of Norway over the eastern hills, and bathed his red silk robe in rays of gold. Magnus returned the glance as he strolled along, thanking the sun in his heart for smiling so brightly on his wedding morn. After stopping a moment to admire the beauty of the famous Vale of Clwyd he slowly retraced his steps, casting an occasional glance at the fields where the army was encamped. On approaching the castle his eyes rested for a moment on the beautiful arches erected for the wedding, and his heart gave a bound of joy as he thought how soon the event was now to be. But why was there no more activity around the castle? Why did he not hear sounds of music? Why did the guards stare at him so strangely as he entered the court-yard? Where were his own servants? All this was most bewildering to the king. He entered the hall. There were the wreaths and festoons beautiful as ever. There were the guests also, but no one lifted the drinking horn to his lips. The harpers were as silent as the grave. Everybody wore a strange look. What did it mean?

Gryffydd arose and taking Magnus by the hand said huskily,

"There can be no wedding without a bride. My daughter is nowhere to be found! She has disgraced the living in her loyalty to the dead. Pluck her image from your heart; let her name perish."

CHAPTER XXV.

Surprises.

Gryffydd ceased speaking and Magnus stood like one struck with lightning in the midst of the silent and astonished guests that filled the hall, when the clatter of horses' feet was heard. Nearer and louder grew the sound, denoting no ordinary degree of haste. Then it suddenly ceased, and a voice whose tone indicated a high degree of anxiety and apprehension demanded of the guards stationed at the gate,

"Am I too late? For heaven's sake tell me quick."

"Too late for what?" was the inquiry. "You have forgotten to tell us your business."

"By my confession to heaven! if it is not the prince!" cried another voice. "And there is Cadwallader too!"

"Make way there, ye confounded idiots, or else I'll trample you to death," said Trahaiarn, urging his horse off the draw-bridge into the court-yard in a fit of impatience, and waiting not for the guards to recover their senses sufficiently to make the desired reply. A moment later, leaving his horse in charge of his squire, he hastened towards the king's hall, into which he entered in time to find Gryffydd and Magnus still standing in the bitterness of disappointment. Unwashed and unkempt with a thick growth of black beard covering the greater part of a face whose only hairy ornament heretofore had been a heavy moustache, the prince created an impression as strange as that which he received from the condition of things in the hall; and before he had

time to recover from his embarrassment at what he saw, Gryffydd, mistaking him for a bearer of evil tidings said in an irritated voice,

"Speak man. Why dost thou stand there like a mute? If there are more evils to come upon me let me hear them. Tell me that she has found a grave in the Clwyd. Speak I say."

"Heavens! is my betrothed dead?" cried Trahaiarn completely bewildered. "Tell me that she is dead rather than that she is married to an alien!"

"Who art thou," inquired Gryffydd, fixing a searching look on Trahaiarn's face. "Are we all bewitched? Is the dead come to life? Art thou Trahaicrn or his ghost?"

"I am all there is left of thy vassal, O king," replied the prince, scarcely knowing what he said by reason of his extreme anxiety to learn what had transpired.

And now followed a scene of excitement such as was never witnessed in the castle before. Gryffydd forgetting for the moment his disappointment at the disappearance of his daughter embraced the prince in the most fatherly manner, then relinquished him to the brotherly demonstrations of the princes Meredith and Ithel, while the Welsh guests in their joy at Trahaiarn's return rent the air with shouts of gladness. All this seemed very strange to Magnus' men, who saw in the newcomer only a dirty looking adventurer. Magnus, however, was not so slow in learning who he was, having surmised that it was the missing prince before he was positively informed that it was he. Nor had he any reason or inclination to remain longer under Gryffydd's roof. Indeed Nest's disappearance together with Trahaiarn's unexpected return made an early departure extremely desirable. Accordingly he and his men left for

Conway early in the afternoon escorted by Prince Meredith with a number of the Welsh courtiers, and before sunset he sailed for Norway.

In the meantime Trahaiarn having received and given all desired explanations hastened to remove such traces of his long imprisonment as his inclination and toilet made possible, and in due time returned to the hall looking much like his former self except that he was thinner and had an older look. Having learned that the princess and her maid had secretly left her room the night before, leaving no clue to indicate her place of concealment, it was natural that he should be very anxious to go in search of her. He also had a strong desire to punish his captors for the suffering they had caused him. Wavering at first between these two desires he finally decided that as the search for the princess would occupy several days if not weeks, and the chastisement of the outlaws demanded immediate action he would set out as soon as practicable against the latter. Accordingly with Gryffydd's consent he chose a large force of men from the army still encamped a short distance from the castle, and forming two divisions he found Meredith willing to take command of one while he took charge of the other. As soon as Meredith returned from Conway, therefore, they started on their mission of revenge, the prince royal going in the direction of Cefn, and Trahaiarn proceeding towards the scene of his imprisonment, reaching a point east of Ruthin before daybreak. Here the prince divided his men into two forces of equal strength, giving charge of one of them to a young chief, and leading the other himself. Taking a circuitous route each proceeded to the robber's haunt, while Cadwallader played the part of a scout. The object of this precaution was that the approach of one division from the south and the

other from the north might make it more difficult for the outlaws to make their escape should they attempt to leave the cavern. While the two bands pursued their respective courses the grey dawn appeared and gradually expanded into twilight, enabling them to see their way more clearly. But the faint light that aided their advance also enabled such of the outlaws as were on the watch for enemies to see them approaching and to disappear unseen into the cavern. So that when the two divisions arrived near the robber's den shortly after, it was without catching a single glimpse of the enemy. Was it possible after all that Hoel had sought another refuge? Had he been so indiscreet as to seek safety in the caves at Cefn, a thing that Trahaiarn had not thought likely, although he had sent Meredith there? While the prince revolved these thoughts in his mind Cadwallader ventured a short distance into the cavern and saw that the curtain was gone. He listened but could hear no sound, and sniffed the air but could smell no smoke. Yet he was loth to believe that the place was deserted. He peered into the gloom again, but although it was now broad daylight outside there was scarcely light enough in the cavern to enable him to discern objects far beyond where he stood. Trahaiarn spoke to him, and he was about to reply, when he was startled by a faint groan as if of a man in pain not many feet away. This was enough. He was sure now that the cavern was not so deserted as it seemed, and turning to the prince he said,

"The arrow which sped from your bow the other night did but wound the accursed hermit, I fear, for it must be he that I heard groan just now."

"Art thou sure that thou heardst a groan?" asked the prince.

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which Trahaiarn had on when he was captured, made straight for the prince, striking right and left with a Danish axe. The prince, however, receiving on his shield the blow aimed at his head sprang upon his assailant with the quickness of thought, and grappling with him fell with him to the ground, succeeding after a hard struggle in wresting the axe from his hand, but not before receiving a slight wound from one of Hoel's men, who immediately after fell dead to the ground. But though Trahaiarn had his enemy in his power, Cadwallader deprived him of the pleasure of dispatching him by seizing the axe and burying it in the robber's head. The last outlaw was now dead, and the prince rising to his feet saw the ground strewn with the slain. He had had his revenge, and had rid the country of its worst enemies.

Curious to know what the cavern still contained he now entered it accompanied by Cadwallader and a dozen others, and striking a flint he lighted a torch and advanced to the spot where he had so long sat as a prisoner and a prey to gloomy thoughts. A shiver passed through him as he thought of the sufferings he had undergone, and his voice trembled as he said,

"But for thy devotion and ingenuity, Cadwallader, I would still be crouching there a miserable and hopeless wretch."

"Ah! what have we here?" said the squire pretending not to hear, and bending over a human form a few feet beyond the prince. "Be kind enough to bring the light here, somebody."

The prince who still held the torch took a few steps forward followed by the rest, and looking down upon a face upon which the marks of death were visible he exclaimed,

"The sacred toe of St. David! if it is not the traitor Einion ap Howel!"

"Then Einion ap Howel and the hermit are one and the same person, for has he not on the hermit's garb?" said Cadwallader.

The man whom they all thought dead now uttered a deep groan, and opening his eyes he gazed bewilderingly at the prince. Then in a voice scarcely above a whisper he said,

"Where is Hoel? Tell him to come to me."

"Hoel is where thou wilt soon be, and where all traitors ought to be," said Trahaiarn.

A look of malignity came into the dying man's eyes, and summoning all his strength he said,

"Friend of tyrants, thy doom is settled! Einion ap Howel curses thee; Howel the hermit consigns thee to perdition."

He said no more; death had sealed his lips forever.

Leaving him where he was the prince and his men now searched the cavern for plunder which they surmised must be there; and their search was presently rewarded with much booty. This they carried outside, and after burying the slain in the cavern the whole force left for Rhuddlan, where Meredith had already arrived.

In the evening Emrys, one of the king's guard, desired and obtained an interview with Trahaiarn in the latter's room in the castle.

"You know that the Norwegian king returned to his kingdom without his bride," said Emrys.

"I would have been dull indeed not to know it, since I have heard scarcely anything else since my return," replied Trahaiarn.

"Little would he have thanked me had he known who aided the princess to escape. Indeed I fear King

Gryffydd himself would make up the loss of a royal son-in-law by divorcing my head from my body had he known my secret."

"Didst thou then aid the princess to leave the castle? If so, where is she now?"

"I will tell you where to seek her after I have told you how she escaped. Ye know perchance that Enid the maid swears by her mistress more than by her patron saint. Leastwise her woman's wit knows how to serve her devotion to her mistress. Knowing that I was averse to the marriage she disguised herself by donning a man's attire, and accosted me soon after I was relieved from my post of duty two days ago. As there were many strangers in the hall by reason of the expected marriage no one suspected who she was, and she unfolded to me a plan of escape and secured my promise to aid her, even in broad daylight, and while many were passing to and fro. Accordingly a little before the first cock-crowing, night before last, I helped them over the wall back of the stables into a coracle which I had placed in the moat, and while they hastened away I returned to my comrades."

"Thou art a worthy fellow, Emrys, and I shall not forget thy timely service. But go on; thou hast not told me where the princess expected to seek refuge."

"That is a secret, noble prince, which none but you should learn from me, for I swore to the princess that in case you should never return the secret should die with me."

"Good; but now that I have returned I shall help thee to keep it until such time as we think proper to divulge it to others."

"Well, then, unless Princess Nest has changed her mind you will find her in the convent at Gwytherin."

After this interview the prince returned to the hall

with a new purpose in his heart and the glow of pleasurable anticipation on his countenance.

CHAPTER XXVI.

At the Convent.

Gwytherin, the place referred to by Emrys, stood on a small eminence at the head of an insignificant vale not far from the source of the Elwy, and was scarcely large enough to be dignified with the name of village. Yet owing to St. Winifred's connection with it, it was more widely known in the middle ages than many more pretentious places. Next to the saint's chapel, the only building of note in it was a convent of nuns. Nor was this of such a nature that it would be considered worth a second look to-day. Like nearly all other buildings of the kind at that time in Wales, it was a low ungainly structure built of rough timber, yet in material and appearance much superior to the average dwelling. The most important apartment in the whole building was the cell of the abbess, and into this two days after their escape from the castle were Nest and her maid ushered by one of the nuns. The abbess received them with due courtesy, and gladly offered them the succor sought.

"I perceive by your speech," said the abbess, "that you have come from some part of Gwynedd. What part may it be?"

"Rhuddlan," replied Nest, perceiving that she would best serve her own interests by speaking without reserve.

"Indeed! then you must be the daughter of one of the king's courtiers, for you have neither the dress nor the manners of one of inferior rank."

"I am rather the daughter of King Gryffydd himself."

"And therefore a princess. I have the honor of being

of royal blood myself, my mother being the daughter of one of Idwal Voel's descendants. Is your companion your maid?"

"She is, though like yourself of royal lineage."

"The daughter of Gryffydd ap Llewelyn, doubtless, has not left the castle of her father without cause."

Taking this as a hint that an explanation of the circumstances which caused her to leave home was now desired, the princess spoke of her father's determination that she should marry the King of Norway, and her escape from the castle in order to avoid being married to a man whom she could never love.

"Are you not afraid that your father will trace you here and compel you still to marry Magnus?" asked the abbess closely regarding the princess.

"Besides yourself there is but one person who knows where we are, and he will not betray us," was the reply.

"Why should you be averse to marrying the Norwegian king? If I am rightly informed royal matches are as frequently made without love as with it."

Nest hesitated a moment and then said with a blush,
"Because I love another."

"Ah! I see. Your love has gone where your father's choice would not go," continued the abbess.

"Methinks not, Trahaiarn being as much his choice as my own. At least he never disapproved of his attentions."

"Trahaiarn? Ah, that is the young prince who was attacked and carried away by the outlaws some months ago. I knew not that he was your lover."

There was a touch of sympathy in the voice of the abbess as she uttered these words. Had she thought fit to do so she also could have told a tale both of disappointed and tragic love. But she spoke of the vanity and

disappointment of the world instead, not forgetting to hint at the superior advantages and satisfaction of convent life, and especially of the convent of Gwytherin.

The princess and her maid now followed the abbess to the cell of honor, where they were left alone to remove such traces of their journey as had clung to their persons and attire, and prepare to dine with the abbess.

"What a cold cheerless place it is," whispered Enid, glancing at the rough, bare walls. "To me it seems more like a prison than a religious retreat. No wonder that all the nuns look as though they had not a friend in the world. If I should stay here long I should surely die."

"Solemnity well befits religion, Enid," said Nest, "and it certainly becomes my present mood far better than would a place of gaiety. As I now feel I would not be averse to taking the veil myself, especially under so saintly and motherly a person as the abbess appears to be. She must have been of exceptional beauty in her youth, and there is a stateliness about her even now, that her nun's garb seems to enhance rather than conceal."

"I am sorry, sweet mistress, you are not in a happier mood, for it is not like you to desire to live in a convent, even though an angel from heaven were in charge of it. Much as I value piety, and I often wish I were more pious, it stands not to reason to think that he who gave us youth, desires so great a sacrifice as to pluck it like a tender flower from its native place and clime and plant it in sadness and gloom."

"Thou speakest not wisely, Enid. Thou knowest that piety is the best ornament of youth as well as of age, and that no place is so favorable to the growth of piety as the calm, sacred solitude of a convent. At least thou must admit that a king's court favors piety much less than it does vanity."

"Then it is your purpose to bury yourself in this cheerless tomb for the rest of your life?"

"I know not yet what I shall do; for life has but little charm for me now. If Trahaiarn be indeed really dead, one place is as congenial to me as another, and since I have disgraced my father's house I see no alternative but to remain here. Thou, however, must not be guided by my action. If I decide to take the veil thou must seek more congenial surroundings."

Before Enid could reply to this the door was opened by a nun who came to announce that dinner was ready, and as their toilet was now complete they proceeded at once to the abbess' cell, and sat down to a simple meal. While they ate they discoursed with the abbess upon various topics connected with the church, notably the monastic feature of it.

The meal over the princess and her maid returned to the cell of honor, where they remained the most of the time until the next evening, when they repaired with the nuns to the saint's chapel. They were given a seat on the left side of the chapel, and apart from the nuns, and they participated in the worship with the devotion of sincere Catholics. At the conclusion of the service the abbess showed them the chapel with all that was sacred within and without it. It was a small structure built of timber like the convent, and its seats were slabs with two legs thrust into augur holes at each end. Among the curious things in this crude chapel was a tombstone with a singular cross engraved on it in close proximity to an ancient battle-axe. But by far the most sacred object of all was the box in which the relics of St. Winifred were kept; and to this the abbess in due time led the refugees. All knelt before it with the greatest reverence, and silently poured out their hearts' desires to the

saint whom they thought was especially attentive to their prayers. The princess and her maid were almost overpowered with emotion, and their imagination was wrought to so high a pitch that they were sure the saint was standing near them with outstretched arms, and that they heard her whisper a blessing over them.

At length they all arose, a feeling of superstitious reverence still clinging to their souls.

"You have been highly blessed, my daughters," said the abbess. "You need not tell me that you have felt the holy presence of the saint. I see it in your faces. It is a most favorable omen, and one which is not vouchsafed to many. It means that you are not simply to enjoy her protection, but that you are to join the sisterhood that she has specially favored so long."

This announcement caused a terrified look to appear in Enid's face. In spite of her religious excitement, which, however, was not so intense as that of Nest, she was as averse as ever to the thought of becoming a nun. Perceiving her terrified look the abbess continued,

"You must crucify the flesh and renounce the world forever. You disregard the saints' wishes at your peril. I will not insist, however, that you should enter on your novitiate immediately. But it would be well for you to keep in mind what I have said."

Neither Nest nor Enid replied to this bold advance on the part of the abbess, but as they followed her out of the chapel there was a look of determination in the maid's face that spoke of a defiant heart. As the convent was near the chapel they were soon in their respective cells, the abbess to resume her duties and the refugees to reflect on what had transpired.

"I care not what happens to me," said Enid, breaking a long silence. "I will not remain here."

"Then thou wilt wilfully incur the saint's displeasure by ignoring her evident desire," said the princess.

"I have no undoubted assurance that it is her desire that I should ever become a nun."

"Did not the abbess say so? She surely ought to know."

"Though I dislike to say it, I fear the abbess was guided more by her own anxiety to seize a favorable opportunity than by a knowledge of the saint's wishes in saying what she did. But hark!"

"What is that noise? It sounds like a body of horsemen."

"I wish the window faced the street so we could see what it is."

The princess was right, it was a cavalcade of horsemen in armor, who coming to a halt in the road gazed in the direction of the convent, while the leader and one other advancing into the court-yard dismounted near the door of the convent.

"Pardon this intrusion," said the leader to a nun that now appeared at the door. "Can I see the abbess?"

The nun muttered something in reply and immediately disappeared, but returned soon after and led the visitor into a cell which was used as a reception room for men. Here the abbess received him with due reserve, and showed him to a rough seat.

"My business is to inquire whether you have within the past three days received two refugees into your convent," said the visitor in an anxious tone.

The abbess regarded him for an instant in silence, saying to herself that he must be from Rhuddlan, and in search of Gryffydd's daughter. Then she said,

"The rules of our order, you must know, demand that we shield all who appeal to us for succor. Therefore I

am not obliged to answer your question either positively or negatively."

"Your caution, madam, is wholly unnecessary in this case, since I seek them only for their good," was the reply.

"Who is it that you seek? and who are you that seek them? I think my position and duties justify these questions."

"Neither their identity nor my own is a matter for concealment. You are talking, madam, to Trahaiarn ap Caradoc, and I am seeking Nest, the daughter of Gryffydd, who with her maid is said to be in this convent."

The nun struggled for a moment with the woman in the abbess. She hated to have her plan respecting the princess and her maid upset; yet enough of the woman had survived the severities of the convent life to make her heart respond to Trahaiarn's eagerness.

"Those whom you seek are here," said she after a pause, "but if I be not mistaken you are the last person the princess would expect to seek for them. Not that she has forgotten you but that she despairs of ever seeing you again."

"For heaven's sake bring her to me!" was the prince's response.

To enter the cell of honor was but the work of a moment, but the abbess found it not an easy task to break the glad news in store for Nest in a manner satisfactory to herself. The princess noticing her hesitation said,

"Ah, I know that your visit purports no good to me! I will never forgive that treacherous Emrys for betraying my secret. But though my father send a thousand men after me I shall die rather than marry that hateful foreigner."

"You are seized with needless alarm," the abbess

hastened to explain. "It is joy and not sorrow that awaits you."

"Joy? Then the best of fathers has sent for me to return to his forgiving arms and not to marry Magnus!"

"Something better than a father's forgiveness."

"It cannot be, it is too good a thing to be true, that Trahaiarn is alive and has come for me!"

"Come and see for yourself."

Despite the tact which the abbess displayed in acquainting the princess with Trahaiarn's presence she fell into a swoon from which she recovered only after the lapse of several minutes, and by the assistance of the abbess and Enid. No sooner did she regain consciousness, however, than she accompanied the mistress of the establishment to the reception room and flew to her lover's embrace only again to faint away. And now followed a most touching scene, a scene witnessed by no mortal eyes. Trembling in every limb with pent up emotion Trahaiarn seated the unconscious princess on a form and supporting her on his strong arm he showered kisses and tears on her lovely face.

"You will not leave me again?" said Nest presently coming to herself and clinging convulsively to the prince.

"Never, sweet love, never," said the prince kissing her again.

"I had given you up as dead," continued the princess after a pause.

"And I was as good as dead, dear, had it not been for Cadwallader," was the prompt reply. Then continuing he told Nest all that had happened to him during the period of his captivity, and how he had wreaked vengeance on the outlaws.

Meanwhile matters were proceeding satisfactorily with

Enid and the squire. When the maid learned of the presence of the prince in the convent she naturally hoped that Cadwallader might be with him, and she was so excited when her mistress swooned that she scarcely knew what to do. Nor was she more composed, when, following the princess to the door of the reception room she stopped in the passage and buried her face in her hands. In spite of herself her limbs would tremble, and though she had done all she could to banish the hope that had come to her mind, she was disappointed that no one inquired for her. A flood of tears naturally followed, during which Cadwallader, having tied the horses to a post in the yard, hurried into the passage, and catching sight of the weeping maid suddenly enveloped her in his arms greatly to her surprise, and to the horror of the abbess and two or three of the nuns, who now scampered into their cells, lest they should be contaminated by the further sight of worldly passion. Being restored again to each other the lovers were too much engrossed in one another to notice this little by-play of feminine sanctity. Nor was their love less demonstrative than that of the prince and princess.

But even scenes like these must have an end, and the abbess was not a little relieved when Nest and her maid came to thank her for the succor which they had received, and to place a reward in her hands.

"If the offering is not large enough to atone for our lack of compliance with the wishes of St. Winifred, I am quite willing to increase it; and indeed I shall at my earliest convenience, seeing that she has sent me so much joy."

Nest spoke with much of her old time vivacity, and received the assurance of the abbess that, although she was sorry not to have her and Enid enter the novitiate,

she thought their patron saint might possibly forgive them for returning to the world, provided the consideration was large enough. Pleased with this assurance the two now took leave of the abbess, and hastened out of the convent. Then mounting two palfreys brought for their accommodation they rode beside their respective lovers and proceeded in the direction of Rhuddlan, closely followed by the mounted escort that had waited for them in the road. "And it was to aid the prince to escape from his cruel captors that you left us so suddenly!" remarked Enid, glancing admiringly at her lover. "Why did you not tell me where you were going?"

"I was afraid that you would disapprove of my scheme or laugh at it as the vain fancy of a madman," was the reply.

"Say rather that you liked to keep your own counsel too well to share it with me," said the maid with an injured air. "I have not forgiven you for the falsehood you told me yet."

"Then I am ready to do penance, provided it be not too severe. What shall it be? I hope you will not be so cruel as to deny me the honey of your lips."

"How nonsensical you are! Tell me how you rescued the prince."

"Ah, if that be the only penance imposed on me I shall soon claim your forgiveness. Well, when I left you that day I went to Chester, where in default of something better I hired out as a swine-herd."

"A swine-herd? An honorable occupation indeed for a prince's squire to be engaged in!"

"But it suited my purpose well. I did not think it wise to risk recognition by joining the outlaws at once, for I feared some of them might have seen me around the castle. Therefore I waited until nature had com-

pletely disguised my face, and my lowly occupation made such other changes in my appearance as were desirable. At the end of two months I thought I looked enough like an outlaw to be mistaken for one, and sought the cavern which I suspected was one of the robber's haunts."

Enid shuddered at the thought of the risk he undertook.

"When I arrived at the cavern," continued the squire, "the sentinel posted at its entrance savagely demanded what I wanted. I told him I was a fugitive from justice, and that I desired to wreak my vengeance on the tyrannical brood that made life intolerable to their vassals. My speech pleased the outlaw and through him I soon found audience with Hoel, who, after putting many questions to me, consented to admit me to his band. As yet I knew not whether the prince was dead or alive; but advancing to the circle of outlaws who eyed me critically as I approached the fire around which they sat, I saw a crouching figure which I inferred must be my master. I took care, however, to manifest no undue interest in him, and to disguise my voice as much as possible in order to guard against suspicion. Subsequently, after I had formed the acquaintance and gained the confidence of the outlaws, they informed me who the captive was, and why he was held in captivity. It was only on the night of our escape, however, that Hoel thought fit to assign me to the post of guard. Nor would he have done so that night had I given the least sign of the interest I felt in the prince. My heart ached more than once at the misery and suffering of my master, but I knew that my feelings must be in subjection to my purpose. At last when the long-looked for opportunity came I was prepared for action. I could scarcely

wait for Hoel and the rest to leave the cave, so impatient was I to put an end to my master's captivity. But I successfully bided my time, and dealing my companion a stunning blow on the head I at once cut the prince's bands and led him out to liberty over the expiring form of the sentinel in front of the cavern."

These details together with an account of the prince's revenge that followed greatly pleased the maid, and raised Cadwallader still higher in her estimation. Not only was she glad that her mistress owed to him the unexpected happiness that she now enjoyed, but that his bold adventure had declared him worthy of a place among heroes as well as in her affections.

Meanwhile the princess listened to a similar account from Trahaiarn's lips, occasionally wiping a tear of sympathy or gratitude from her eyes, and interrupting him with questions and exclamations. So interested was she in the narrative that she was scarcely conscious that night was closing in upon them. Nor was there any reason to fear now that the outlaws were dead. The only disagreeable feature about the journey was a drizzling rain that set in soon after they started, and which did not cease until they reached the castle. The lovers in their present mood, however, felt that this was a trifling circumstance, unworthy of complaint.

CHAPTER XXVII.

Caradoc and Harold.

The princess' joy at Trahaïrn's safe return was more than equaled by Caradoc's exasperation at the prince's triumph over him. When the hermit fell pierced by an arrow from an unseen hand, and he himself took to his heels, he was by no means certain as to who the concealed enemy could be. But upon reaching the cavern he saw enough to convince him that the hidden foe was none other than Trahaïrn. So enraged did he become when he realized what had taken place that instead of returning to see whether the hermit was dead or alive he immediately proceeded to where his horse was grazing, sprang into the saddle, and galloped away towards the south.

"Had I not listened to that accursed hermit's nonsense this would not have happened," said he to himself, grinding his teeth in angry disappointment. "I told the old fool how it would be, and I was a greater fool for listening to him, for now that base sycophant has regained his liberty and I am deprived of my anticipated revenge."

His horse must have been surprised at the unusual behavior of his master, for the latter urged him on with the recklessness of a madman in utter disregard of the darkness. Before reaching Hereford, however, Caradoc's towering passion lost its strength, and his conscience began to upbraid him for showing so little consideration for his old friend, the hermit. This at length caused him to relent, and procuring a fresh horse he

presently began to retrace his steps. Reaching the vicinity of Llanarmon he first went to the spot where the hermit had fallen, but found no trace of him except a pool of blood where he had lain. Then as he was about to start towards the cavern he heard the tramp of horses and men coming from that direction, and as he was in doubt as to the character of the men he hid himself and horse in a clump of trees, and screened by the thick foliage and brush he presently saw the man so recently in his power riding by at the head of his strong band. This unexpected sight irritated Caradoc beyond all reasonable bounds, and he almost committed the folly of betraying his presence when he learned from what he saw and heard that Trahaiarn had wreaked his vengeance on the outlaws.

Presently, thinking it safe to leave his concealment, he remounted his horse and rode to the cavern, where he was soon satisfied that Trahaiarn had reason for his triumph. Then hastening away from a scene so harrowing to his thoughts and feelings, he arrived in due time at Portascyth, greatly to the discomfort of his family and retainers.

It was some time after this that a report reached Portascyth, that Algar, Earl of Chester, was dead, and that Morcar, his son, had succeeded to his titles and estates. The report was verified from different sources, much to the satisfaction of Caradoc and his friends, and stimulated by it into renewed activity the vindictive lord decided upon another visit to Harold. This visit was for the two-fold purpose of ascertaining whether the earl meditated any revenge in consequence of the late incursion of the Welsh king and his allies into England, and of offering his assistance in case he did. Upon his arrival in London he found Harold in the same room

where he and Leofgar had conferred with him on the previous occasion.

"It is not often we have the pleasure of seeing the lord of Portascyth at the capital," said Harold with a shade of sarcasm. "Had Gryffydd's power been equal to his inclination methinks even Westminster would have seen him more frequently than you."

"You speak truly," said Caradoc. "Yet I hope that my visits to London, rare as they have been, are less hostile in their intentions than his would have been, at least as regards the peace of England."

"I doubt not your words, for a man's actions are a proof of his intention. Gryffydd has given us trouble enough and to spare, and I know some at least who would rejoice to see him where his contentious father-in-law now is."

"I fear Gryffydd is too fond of harassing and plundering his enemies to leave the world of his own accord yet awhile."

"Then he ought to be forced to leave it. With such a bold, unscrupulous plunderer as he is known to be, always concocting mischief and death, England is never safe. Every wild adventurer who has a quarrel with king Edward, or has designs upon his throne, finds him a willing and powerful ally. We have not forgotten any of his incursions, especially the last in company with Magnus and Algar."

There was an ominous fire in Harold's eye as he uttered these words, and a ring in his voice which pleased Caradoc not a little. Emboldened by this show of passion the Welsh lord cautiously replied,

"Were the illustrious Harold to decide upon a campaign against the Welsh lion he would find not a few of Cambria's best sons ready to aid him."

"How many do you think could be depended on should Edward decide to send an army into Wales?" asked the earl, closely regarding Caradoc.

"I can give only an imperfect estimate, but I have reason to believe that at least one third of the tribes are already more or less dissatisfied with Gryffydd."

"Are any of the principal chieftains dissatisfied?"

"Ay, and some of them have even hinted to me that they are ready to pledge their aid to England, provided the English king will support their claims. To be more explicit, Bleddyn and Rhiwallon, Gryffydd's half-brothers, are willing to enter into a conspiracy against him, provided his kingdom be divided between them at his death. Meredith ap Owen also, I am told, is ready to enter into a campaign against Gryffydd on certain conditions, of which I have no knowledge. As to myself I am ready to do all in my power to forward your plans touching this matter, if you think fit to promise that I shall be made prince of the Deheubarth at the close of the campaign."

"I shall consider what you have said, and if the king will look with favor upon a proposition that I intend to bring to his notice in the near future, I shall be glad to enter into negotiations with you and all the Welsh chieftains who may favor our cause."

Harold might have told Caradoc that he had already adopted measures to increase the army and navy with a view to crushing the Welsh king, but it seemed best to him to keep the Welsh lord in ignorance of that fact for a time at least. He dismissed him with such flattering words and vague promises, however, as made him think that his visit would not be in vain.

A period of considerable length now elapsed, during which there was no outbreak of importance among the

Welsh. But the leaven of dissension, which so often wrought destruction among the people, and from which fair Cambria was never entirely free, was secretly spreading and undermining the public peace. Especially was this true in the Deheubarth and certain portions of Powysland. Old feuds were revived, and new jealousies and suspicions sprang into being. There were angry disputes in the halls, and altercations and occasional blows in public places. Caradoc ap Gryffydd, still bent upon avenging the death of his father and actuated by his strong desire to come into possession of Deheubarth, looked with secret delight upon all this, and lost no opportunity to magnify trifles and to widen breaches which already existed between certain chiefs. He also received occasional visits from Harold's trusted messengers, and kept the earl well informed of the state of things in Wales. After the last of these visits he proceeded with much speed, accompanied by the envoys, to Cibwyr, and found Bleddyn in one of his most jovial moods.

"Your visit could never have been more opportune," said the host after the customary exchange of civilities. "I hope you are all hungry as wolves and thirsty as salt herrings, so that you can enjoy a good dinner."

"I fear you will have reason to wish we were not so hungry and thirsty presently, if all feel as I do," said Caradoc with a broad smile.

"Enormous as I know your appetite to be," was the laughing rejoinder. "I think Ivan will manage to satisfy it, and give the rest of us enough in the bargain."

After the meal both host and guests applied themselves to more serious business, care being taken that the hall was cleared of all but themselves.

"Harold, the earl, sends greeting to you and to all the Welsh chieftains who are ready to join him in a cam-

paign upon which he is about to enter," said one of the envoys. "And he wishes to assure you that you and your brother shall be rewarded respectively with Gwynedd and Powys, provided in addition to your service you will swear allegiance to King Edward, and give him such hostages as he shall think fit to demand."

"From what has already passed between us," said Bleddyn, "the earl understands, does he not, that Rhiwallon and myself are not to enter openly upon this campaign?"

"He said nothing to the contrary."

"Then you may convey to him my brother's promise and mine to duly fulfill our part of the compact, and our wishes for his success. But when is the campaign to begin?"

"As soon as practicable after our return."

When matters were settled to the satisfaction of all concerned the envoys left the hall and hastened back to London, while Caradoc tarried some hours longer to have a private talk with his host.

"With the addition of your men," said he, "I shall be able to make a good showing, and Harold will be not a little pleased with our strength."

"I fear, though, that unless Gryffydd can be surprised ere he has time to summon his forces together he will make a desperate fight, and perhaps come off victorious," was the reply.

"The wily Harold, no doubt, will see to that. But if by some mischance he should avoid defeat, or slip out of our grasp, we must be prepared to follow him up, and supplement the tactics of open warfare with more subtle methods."

"Exactly, I see. It is easier to rob a house from within than from without. I hope, however, that we shall be

spared the necessity of resorting to foul means in order to further our plans."

"Foul means or fair, it will make no difference to Gryffydd since his fate is settled, nor to us for that matter since we are bent on having our own way."

The interview at length was brought to a close, and Caradoc sought his own home. On the way he met a petty chief whom he knew to be among the disaffected, and said,

"How rests your sword, Cadwallon? Comfortable or uncomfortable? It is long since it had any exercise."

"Too long, Caradoc, too long," was the reply. "If I have not occasion to wield it soon I fear I shall lose my skill. How blows the wind from the east?"

"Very favorable. It is bound to blow us some good this time. Harold has his preparations all made, and we must all hold ourselves in readiness to join him."

"When is he expected to leave London?"

"Within a week at most. When the time comes we are to join him at Worcester. You will not speak of this to any one not in our secret."

"I will bite my tongue off first."

"That's right. Good day."

"Good day to you."

Each now went his way, thinking of the coming event which was to make them both happy.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

The Unexpected Happens.

Dark and frowning like a stern giant of the night stood Rhuddlan Castle, while the full moon, peering ever and anon through rifts in the clouds, looked down on the snow-clad vale of Clwyd. The cold north wind sighed among the leafless branches of the swaying trees, and occasionally a faint sound like the echo of the festive songs which so recently filled the king's hall reached the ear of the vigilant watchman on the tower and the faithful guards in the court-yard. Within the spacious hall a crackling fire sent thick volumes of smoke in quest of an imperfect chimney in the roof, while the fitful light which struggled with the troublesome smoke dimly revealed the arches, crosses, wreaths and festoons of evergreen, holly, ivy and ferns, which, though the Christmas festivities were ended, still decorated the walls, rafters, and pillars. In the lower part of the hall the petty officers sat amusing each other with ghost stories; and in the upper part sat the king with his sons and courtiers, alternately discussing matters of varied importance, and listening to Idwal's bardic effusions.

"What thinkest thou has become of the traitor Caradoc?" asked the king addressing Trahaiarn. "He must have despaired of ever accomplishing his murderous purpose after meeting with so little success in his numerous plots. At least he has kept himself very quiet since the death of his chief confederates."

"It is hard to understand how a being of his vindictive nature has not molested us in one way or another for so long," said the prince. "But I fear he is simply biding his time. I hear that he pays frequent visits to the malcontents in the south, and that he is occasionally seen going to and from Cibwyr Hall."

"Bleddyn, no doubt, finds his visits congenial, as he also would rather see me dead than alive. But let them nurse their quarrel, they can do me no harm. Nor am I pining for their friendship, seeing that I have so many loyal subjects around me."

"True; and yet I would rather my uncle would have nothing to do with the crafty villain if only for his own peace of mind. 'Evil communications corrupt good manners,' eh, Morgan? I have heard you occasionally remark so in your sermons. Naturally my uncle is neither treacherous nor revengeful, but I fear the influence of the base Caradoc will eventually transform him into such a vile rascal as he is."

The king's chaplain flattered by Trahaiarn's allusion to a favorite quotation of his spoke in confirmation of what the prince had just said, and Idwal, remembering his personal grudge towards the once pseudo-bard, took occasion to remark,

"The lark consorts with the sparrow to the ruin of his song, and the watch-dog with the wolf to the detriment of his nature. If Bleddyn associates with the hateful Idrys, I mean Caradoc, it is not to his good, and mark my words, the day will come when the evil fruits of this friendship shall become manifest to all, and to the destruction of some."

"Ha, ha, I see thou hast not forgotten thy rival of long ago, Idwal," said Gryffydd, amused at the words of his bard. "Show us that thou canst remember songs

as well as offenses by favoring us with one of thy selections."

"Of what shall it be? Of love or of war?" asked the aged bard running his fingers over the harpstrings.

"First of love for Trahaiarn's benefit, and next of war for the edification of us all," replied the king.

Trahaiarn saw nothing to laugh at in this remark, though the rest received it with merriment. Love was still a serious matter with him, since the king to punish his daughter for her conduct in connection with Magnus had so far refused to give his consent to a marriage that both the prince and princess would gladly have contracted. Yet he thought he saw in this allusion of the king to his love a sign that he was beginning to relent, and he therefore listened with more pleasure to the love song that Idwal now commenced. As the bard proceeded from stanza to stanza he also thought he discerned a hidden reference to his own case, and when the song was ended he applauded with the rest.

"There, I knew thou couldst sing both thyself and the prince into good humor," remarked Gryffydd. "Now let us have a good soul-stirring war song. By my faith, I am weary of these tame uneventful times. I almost wish that some of my craven-souled enemies would again give me some pretext to summon my forces together. But give us the song, and let it breathe of fire and battle."

Idwal obeyed, and commenced a song of his own composing on Gryffydd's attack on Leofgar. It was a song which always took well with the king, and one which the venerable bard always executed with spirit and skill worthy of a younger man. Mild and trembling at first his voice gradually gathered strength, and his touch on the harpstrings revealed more and more the fire that was kindling in his soul. Carrying his audience with

him further and further into the fight he was about to describe the king giving the Bishop of Hereford the fatal blow when his hands fell powerless at his side and his body fell backward to the floor. Before they could fully realize what had happened Trahaiarn and two or three others immediately prang to Idwal's assistance, but as they were about to lift him back to his seat the court physician interfered and proceeded to examine him.

"Let him be taken to his room," said the physician presently, addressing the chamberlain's assistants, who, with the rest in the lower part of the hall, now looked on in silent amazement. Then as he saw the aged bard being borne away, and was about to follow him he whispered to the king, "Poor Idwal has sung his last song. He is stricken with paralysis, and can live but a short time."

A pained expression which already marked Gryffydd's face deepened at this announcement, and turning to his courtiers he said,

"Never was there a more faithful bard than our stricken friend. Long has he been in my service. None knew my moods so well; none hated my enemies more. I shall deeply feel his loss."

Before the king and his courtiers could recover from the shock they had received, a messenger rushed into the hall in great excitement, and waiving all ceremonies he advanced to the king and said,

"Be warned, O king; your enemies have compassed your destruction. Harold, supported by Caradoc ap Gryffydd, is close at hand with fifty thousand men!"

"Art thou mad, man, or art telling the truth?" cried Gryffydd excitedly, springing to his feet.

"Save yourself, O king; you have no time to lose,"

said another messenger hastening into the hall. "Harold the Saxon, and Caradoc the traitor, with an immense army are within two hours' march of the castle."

"The villains!" exclaimed the king. "They think they can pounce upon me like a hawk upon a sparrow. To arms! to arms! Let the beacons be lighted on every hill and eminence. Sound the alarm far and near!"

Such excitement and confusion as was never before seen in Rhuddlan Castle now ensued, messengers hurrying away, domestics half frantic with fear running to and fro, and everybody in the swirl of action.

"By all the saints, this is giving me my wish with a vengeance," said Gryffydd, addressing a few of his chief men hastily summoned together. "A powerful enemy almost at the castle gate, and I with but a handful of men to oppose him! Why have I been kept in ignorance of this secret movement? Have all my subjects turned traitors? Did you know of this treachery, purposely hiding it from me? If it is your desire to get rid of me unsheathe your swords and bury them in this bosom that has never known the dread of death."

The chief men protested that they knew no more than the king about the enemy's movements, and hinted that action of some sort was imperative.

"Action! action!" vociferated the king. "Why talk of action without men to act? An army cannot be summoned in an hour. This is a fine plight for me to whom defeat is unknown to be in."

"Postpone the battle, my lord king, by eluding the enemy this once," Trahaiarn ventured to suggest. "When you have gathered an army you can hurl defiance at him."

"What! I that have never eluded a foe in my life to run

away and leave my home and household to the fury of a merciless enemy?" retorted the king.

"The castle is of less value than your life," said the judge of the court. "As for your household they can be conducted to a place of safety."

"King David, than whom there never was a more valiant man, sought safety in flight when his son Absalom rebelled against him," observed the king's chaplain.

"To go against Harold with a few hundred men would be madness even for the invincible Gryffydd," insisted Trahaiarn. "There is a small craft at the mouth of the river, why not immediately embark in it to Powys or Deheubarth, and there chastise our common foe? Say the word and I will at once convey both the queen and the princess and all your treasure to a place where Harold shall not find them."

"Pardon, O king," said Cadwallader, rushing into the council room. "Pardon for this intrusion. Your life is in immediate danger. We met the enemy's skirmishers scarcely an hour's ride from here, and Prince Meredith when on the point of offering them fight commanded me to warn you of Harold's proximity."

Gryffydd now yielded to the inevitable, and kissing his wife and daughter he hurried away towards the mouth of the river Clwyd, escorted by his guard and court officers, while Ithel and Trahaiarn hastened with such members of the royal household as were in their charge, including the stricken bard, to Tan yr Ogo, a spot a few miles west of Rhuddlan, where a number of natural caverns offered them the protection they sought.

"By my faith," cried Trahaiarn, checking his horse's speed after covering two-thirds of the distance, "we left the castle none too soon. See! the miscreants have already applied the torch to it."

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TAN YR OGOF.

A chorus of exclamations burst forth at the sight of the burning castle, and tears forced themselves into nearly every eye. As they moved onward many a hasty glance was cast in the direction of Rhuddlan.

"Think you the enemy will pursue us?" anxiously asked Nest of her betrothed.

"Not unless some one betray us," was the reply. "Harold knows not where to seek us, and the treacherous Caradoc, while he may seek us where the hermit was wont to dwell, is ignorant of Tan yr Ogo."

"We need fear no evil," said the queen, "even if we were pursued, for I knew earl Harold of old, and I scarcely think him less magnanimous than he was wont to be. At least I would rather fall into his hands than into those of most men that I have seen."

"Pursuit or no pursuit," said Trahaiarn dismounting near a huge calcareous rock, "we have reached our destination. Yonder is our home for the present."

The prince pointed to a large cavern whose huge mouth resembled the arched entrance of a Gothic cathedral. Invisible from where the party stood, and within the entrance, a rock reaching from the top to the floor, and presenting some resemblance to a massive column rudely sculptured, divided the cavern into two apartment, the one on the left being of small depth, the other being of great height and unknown depth. Into this spacious cavity the party now entered led by Ithel and Trahaiarn with lighted torches, and they proceeded at once to make themselves and each other as comfortable as possible. Coarse blankets were hung between them and the mouth of the cavern, and two fires were kindled about a rod apart, one for the higher, the other for the lower members of the family. Around these fires blankets, rugs, and skins were spread on the

floor for the comfort of the fugitives and near where Nest sat was a bed of straw on which lay the still living but unconscious Idwal. Care had been taken also to bring food enough for several days.

"There," said prince Ithel, upon whom devolved the care of the royal household in the absence of his father, "we are almost as comfortable as we ever were. I wish poor Idwal were able to soothe us with his songs as of old."

"It suits me better as it is," said Aldyth to herself. "I at least am in no mood for music, unless indeed it be of the sort I used to hear in my father's hall."

"His singing and playing are over, at least on earth," said Nest. "The physician says he will never recover, and for his sake I am glad he will never know the sudden calamity that has overtaken us."

Trahaiarn now entered after a brief absence, and throwing himself on a blanket near the fire said,

"I have been as far as the road, and it may be reassuring to you that I have seen nothing of an alarming nature."

"Is the castle still burning?" asked Nest.

"I cannot say," was the reply; "for it commences to snow again, making it impossible to see far."

"Then I hope it will snow enough to hide our tracks," said Ithel, "for if when daylight comes the enemy should search the country for us it would not be so easy to find us."

"I hope father is safe," said the princess.

"If he is not it is his own fault," replied the queen. "He preferred embarking in that frail craft to listening to my entreaties. He would have been much safer here."

At length sleep put an end to all conversation for the night, Trahaiarn alone besides those who acted as

sentries, remaining awake. He had insisted upon taking care of the aged bard, and looking after the watch, knowing that otherwise the princess would not have consented to go to sleep. When the night was over he was relieved of his duties, and proceeding cautiously past a cavern which served as a stable, he took a careful survey of the surroundings. The snow-storm which had lasted during the latter part of the night was over, and the sky being now clear he could see the smoke still rising from the smouldering ruins of the castle in the distance. Discovering nothing of a formidable nature he was soon back in the cavern again, and he and the rest passed the day as best they could. When evening came, however, they were greatly alarmed by a report that a body of horsemen was approaching the cavern. But the cause of their fear proved to be prince Meredith and such of his men as had survived contact with the enemy. These to the relief of all reported that the enemy, having learned of Gryffydd's escape, had left the country early in the day. Nor did they fail to entertain the royal household with an account of the part they had taken in harassing the progress of the enemy.

Apprehending no further danger at present, and wishing to be of use to the king, Meredith and Trahaiarn decided to proceed to the south in the morning with such men as they could muster on the way. Accordingly when the appointed time came Trahaiarn took an affectionate leave of Nest, while Cadwallader who was still a bachelor, because Enid refused to marry before her mistress did, kissed his sweetheart goodby, and mounting their steeds both rode away after Meredith, who had already started.

CHAPTER XXIX.

Death and Love.

Gryffydd escaped from Harold's grasp only to be wrecked on Bardsey Island not far from Aberdaron, and was rescued more dead than alive by a fisherman who lived on the island. A long spell of sickness followed, during which the king's recovery was despaired of. In the meantime Harold's army swept over Wales, forcing the people into submission to the English crown, while his navy paroled the Welsh coast to make it more difficult for Gryffydd, who, it was thought, was still alive somewhere not far from Wales, to return. Notwithstanding Harold's vigilance, however, Gryffydd succeeded through the instrumentality of his loyal host in sending a message to his family assuring them of his safety and of his purpose to leave his hiding-place as soon as he thought it wise to do so. When he was fully recovered he bade the kind fisherman an affectionate farewell, and appeared suddenly in his kingdom, greatly to the delight of his family and of his loyal subjects. Harold learning of his return through the Welsh malcontents, again gathered a large army, of which the men of Gwentland and Glamorgan with Caradoc ap Gryffydd and Meredith ap Owen at their head, formed a considerable part. This time, however, they found Gryffydd ready to receive them, he having speedily summoned to his aid a vast number of men from Gwynedd and Powysland, and advanced to the neighborhood of Builth, where

upon learning of Harold's proximity he massed his troops on the hill upon which a remnant of Llewelyn the Great's followers defended themselves in a later age. Being thus in a most favorable position to receive the enemy, it did not annoy him in the least that Harold and his allies planted themselves to the best possible advantage in front of him. He was certain of victory he thought, and he viewed the setting of the August sun with much complacency, thinking that the enemy would surely attempt to force him from his position on the morrow.

His tent stood in the center of his army, and was surrounded by men who were less loyal to him than he suspected, their affections having in a large degree been alienated by Caradoc's intrigues and Harold's flattering promises. Thinking that all his men were as happy as himself at the prospect of a victory in the near future, he invited all the leading men to his tent to a sort of extemporized feast, and his invitation was readily accepted.

"It is a great pleasure to me to see you all again after my unwilling and unavoidable absence," said the king pleasantly, surveying his guests. "And I am sure that your past loyalty warrants the belief that you are all not only willing but anxious to throw off the yoke which Harold's cruelty forced upon you during his late incursions."

Being assured of their sympathy and co-operation, though several of the chiefs had secretly nudged each other, Gryffydd gave them an interesting account of his shipwreck and subsequent sickness, and with a piece of policy which amused, though it did not reconcile the disaffected, he ended by saying,

"As all the court officers with me in the ship found

watery graves, I shall be under the necessity of choosing others to fill their places, and it may be of interest to you to know that those of you who on the morrow shall display the noblest courage, and perform the greatest number of valiant deeds, shall be rewarded with these positions."

The applause which followed this declaration, while it pleased Gryffydd, was only one of many illustrations that even the most honest-hearted can be hypocritical at times. Even while they applauded the king's words, at least a third of the chiefs assured themselves that their host had conferred his last honors. The king's power over them was not a sufficient antidote to the venom which Caradoc had poured into their minds and hearts.

"I have kept you waiting too long, worthy chieftains," said Gryffydd presently. "Had not the angry *ee* deprived me of one of the best head-stewards that ever superintended a feast, you would have been served long ago. But I hope your appetites have been sharpened by the delay, and that you will fall upon the beef and mutton with such avidity as will only be equaled by your liking for the goodly mead and *cwrw* that are soon to follow."

All now helped themselves to the repast that was laid before them, each guest cutting thick slices of meat with his dagger from a chunk of beef or a leg of mutton placed within reach of him.

"You seem to know how to use a dagger to perfection," whispered one of the chieftains to a neighbor.

"Ay, especially in such presence as this," was the reply.

"Did you ever slay a lion with it?"

"No, but I expect to ere long, unless you anticipate

me. I understand you have conceived a liking for lions of late."

"I will not deny it, seeing that several others are stricken with the same disease."

"And have designs on the same lion, eh?"

"Ha, ha, I see that you are thoroughly initiated."

Here Gryffydd, being reminded by Trahaiarn of a deficiency which he himself, on account of pre-occupation, had failed to notice, remarked to his guests,

"The world has dealt hardly with me of late. In addition to the losses already made known to you must be mentioned another. I have been left without a bard, poor Idwal having died of paralysis soon after the enemy's attack upon Rhuddlan. This, together with the fact that I have been far too busy with other matters of late to secure another bard is my excuse for the want of music to-night."

"The defect can be temporarily mended at least, if it is agreeable to the illustrious Gryffydd to have my bard, who is no novice at the profession, display his skill in this august presence," said one of the chieftains who was hostile to the king.

"His services will be most acceptable," was the reply.

The chieftain's bard entered the tent as the drinking horns were filled, and soon added music and song to the joys of the occasion. Trahaiarn remembered the Christmas season when the base Idrys had made an attempt upon the king's life, and closely scrutinized the newcomer at first, but there being nothing in his voice or manner to suggest treachery the prince's suspicion soon vanished, and turning to the king he said that he had heard worse bards.

"Ay, and better," replied the king. "I would be willing to give half my kingdom to have poor Idwal

back again. Didst thou see him breathe his last?"

"No, he died the day after Meredith and I left .or Powys, remaining unconscious to the last."

"And they buried him at St. Asaph."

"Ay, beneath a large yew tree."

"Poor Morgan and the rest had a watery grave. I hope I have not been spared to meet a worse fate."

The night advanced and the king and his guests grew merrier and merrier, while the bard poured song after song into their ears.

"It is now past midnight," said Trahaiarn to the king. "Think you not that I had better take a short tour through the camp?"

"Let Meredith go; but where is he?" was the reply.

"He was called out but a moment ago, and will soon be back. I also will not be gone long."

The bard watched Trahaiarn depart, and when he disappeared from view he glanced at his chieftain, and at a sign from him he commenced a song entitled "The Chief's Revenge." The king who was interested in what one of his guests was saying paid no attention to the song; but it had a peculiar effect on some of the chieftains and upon the men lying on the ground in the vicinity of the tent. Suddenly there was a simultaneous rush within and without, while several voices answered the cry of "Death to the tyrant" with shouts of "Treason! Treason!" Half a dozen daggers pierced the king before he could strike a single blow in his own defense, or his loyal chiefs could interfere; and while the guards were being overpowered without, Gryffydd expired under a final stab from Caradoc, who had just broken into the tent behind him. Terrible confusion now followed, during which the king's friends sought to revenge his death by slaying his murderers, and the

whole army was thrown into a panic. In the midst of the confusion Trahaiarn and Meredith forcing their way with much difficulty through the surging mass of humanity, arrived at the tent in time to see the fiendish Caradoc with the triumph of a demon standing near a large camp-fire, and holding the gory head of Gryffydd, the lion-hearted, on the point of a spear.

"Down with the traitor," cried the princes boiling with uncontrollable rage and swinging their swords.

"Down with the traitor," cried a hundred voices.

"Death to all tyrants and sycophants," answered the murderous Caradoc, pushing his way down the hill towards Harold's army, while a thousand voices repeated his cry.

"If you value your life," whispered a voice in Trahaiarn's ear, "you will seek safety in flight, for you and Meredith are marked men. Go; I will see that the king's body received decent burial."

Trahaiarn's first impulse was to disregard the warning, but thoughts of Nest and of the futility of any attempt to restore order to the army convinced him that to heed the warning was the best policy. Hence after secretly charging the man to repeat the warning to Prince Meredith, and tell him to hasten with all speed to Radnor forest, he pulled his visor over his face and forced himself through the still excited troops towards the north, while a shout of triumph announced the arrival of the arch-traitor with the king's head in the English camp. Then presently finding a horse, he sprang upon his back and galloped away, and plunging into the forest he dismounted to await further developments. He heard horses galloping in various directions, and thought they were in pursuit of him.

"The villains!" said he to himself. "I hope they will

break their necks. But hark! By my faith, I hear some of them are actually coming this way."

Two horsemen now rode into the woods within hearing distance of him, and as they dismounted he heard one of them say to the other,

"It is the most fiendish plot I ever heard of. More than half the army must be implicated in it."

"It is terrible," answered a voice which Trahaiarn recognized as belonging to his squire. "Think you it is true that the princes also have been assassinated?" added the same voice with a tremor.

"No, I at least am still living," said the prince in a husky voice, advancing to where the others stood.

In the meantime Meredith, who had been less fortunate than Trahaiarn, after a desperate struggle with two or three assassins who tasted the edge of his sword, tore himself away, and failing to secure a horse, hastened on foot towards Radnor Forest, not knowing that Trahaiarn had preceded him, his message having failed to reach him. He was happily surprised therefore upon entering the forest about daybreak to find not only Trahaiarn but also quite a number of other loyal subjects anxiously awaiting his arrival.

It was not until Harold's departure and the disbanding of the Welsh forces that the two princes decided to proceed northward. Nor was there now any risk in their leaving their hiding-place, the loyal men of Gwynedd having joined them in great numbers. They had enough to make them sad, however, as they pursued their course homeward. They felt that their countrymen had made a terrible mistake in conspiring against Cambria's best defender, and the lamentations of the people along their line of march convinced them that they also felt the same way. But the mischief was done

now, and what was Cambria's disgrace was England's triumph; at least Harold, to whom intrigue was no novelty, thought so as he proceeded towards London with Gryffydd's head.

Upon reaching Tan yr Ogo, where the royal household still remained, in a temporary structure near the cavern, the princes found that the news of the king's violent death had preceded them. The queen shed profuse tears, but her sorrow was not deep. The manner of Gryffydd's death troubled her more than the fact itself; nor did this trouble her to the exclusion of thoughts of Harold. She knew the earl to be still a bachelor, and she was not unwilling to entertain a hope that her charms might win him for a second husband. True she had heard his name coupled with that of Edith the Fair, but she tried to persuade herself that rumor had more to do with the matter than had Harold.

Nest on the other hand was prostrated by the melancholy news. Her father was to her more than life itself.

"To think that he should die at the hands of assassins!" cried she. "Death by shipwreck would have been a thousand times preferable!"

"Yet it is worse for his assassins than for him," said Trahaiarn. "Their names will perish, but his name will live as long as the Clwyd flows."

"You saved him from the dagger of the arch-traitor once," continued Nest, looking affectionately at him through her tears.

"And I would have tried to save him again had I been present when they fell upon him," was the reply. "It was an evil spirit that put it into my mind to leave the tent when I did."

"I think not, for had you been there I would now be mourning your death also."

"Did they tell you that Cadivor ap Collwyn buried your father's body in the family burying ground?"

"They did, and I shall never forget his kindness."

As yet the family had made no definite arrangements for the future; but a visit from Morcar, now earl of Chester, caused them to hasten matters. The princes Meredith and Ithel decided to live hereafter on their respective estates, while Trahaiarn accepted Morcar's invitation to go for the present to Coventry with Nest and the queen. There being no impediment to their marriage now, the princess consented to fix the date as soon as the period of mourning was over, and Enid gladdened Cadwallader's heart with a similar consent as they rode behind their master and mistress on the way to England. As to Gryffydd's kingdom, Gwynedd was given to Bleddyn, and Powys to Rhiwallon. But Harold kept not his promise to Caradoc ap Gryffydd, for he gave the Deheubarth to Meredith ap Owen, and when the arch-traitor complained, he stole his estates from him. In due time also, he completed his triumph over Wales by marrying the widow of King Gryffydd.

